Stories of Life, Love and Adventure

February 15 Ce

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Little Erolin
A Romance of California
by
Johnston McCu

In This Number
Games That Mean Good Fiction
nes Francis Dwyer
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ephen Allen Reynolds
Henry Oyen
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rick & Terence Casey
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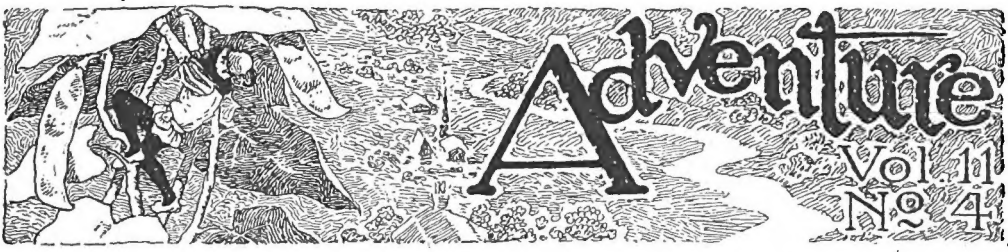

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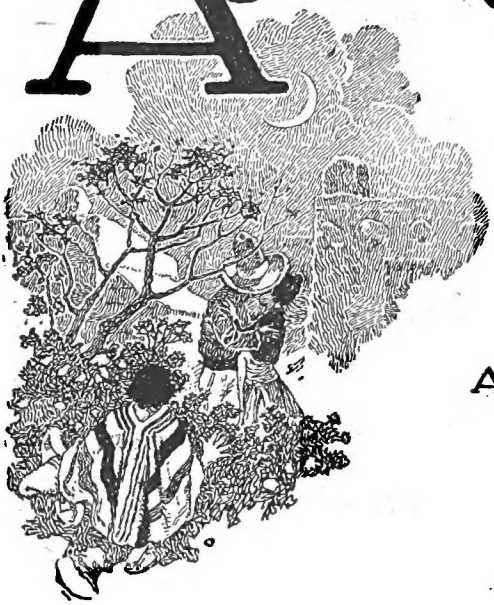

LITTLE EROLINDA

A COMPLETE NOVEL

By Johnston McCulley

Author of "The Thing He Needed," "The Strength of Small."

CHAPTER I

A HALF-WIT HERALD

NOW the mule had reached the crest of the hill, and the broad highway was before him, sloping gradually downward, and he could be expected to travel at a rapid gait; yet Carlos, the half-wit, kicked heels against the animal's flanks to urge the beast to greater endeavor.

Carlos' sombrero was gone, his shirt was open at the throat, his zarape was stretched across his mount before him; he rode with halter only, without saddle, prepared for a short flight through the air and a hard fall in case of disaster. Perspiration streamed from his face and neck and arms. His heart pounded at his ribs because of his exertions. The rushing wind sang in his ears, clouds of red dust rose behind him; crags and brush and scrawny trees flashed by as he traveled mile after mile of El Camino Real—the King's Highway—mile after mile nearer the goal.

"Háh!" he screeched, as he made a turning and saw miles of good road stretching before him. "Hah! It takes Carlos, the half-wit, to make the speed and carry the good news! Not many men can make a mule travel El Camino Real so—not even big 'Audre Baldarama of the strong arm and tender heart. Hah! How the lights will flash in the black eyes of little Erolinda Vargas! There'll be hot enchiladas for Carlos, the half-wit, and there'll be singing around the Vargas' 'dobe and around the rancho house. Hah!"

He bent forward and rode like the wind. Now he passed the edge of a rancho, where neophytes herded cattle and sheep. Now he flashed by à lumbering carreta in which an elderly señora rode, with a gay caballero alongside, going toward the distant mission. Now he passed huts of tule and straw along the highway, with Indian children playing in the road before them,

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and old women sitting in the doorways squinting at the sun.

"Hah!" he screeched to all who could hear. "Big Audre Baldarama comes! By mid-afternoon Big Audre will be at the rancho! Hah!"

Around another bend, and far in the distance, was the mission of San Luis Rey de Francia, with its corridors and its gardens, its toiling neophytes, its storehouse and guesthouse and hospital. The white buildings glistened in the bright light of the California sun, and palm fronds and branches of olive-trees nodded in the breeze that came from the distant sea. Brilliant and brave San Luis Rey de Francia looked, though not so prosperous as formerly, for this was in the days of the Mexican republic, and decadence had begun. 'Twas not the mission it had been in the days of the sainted Junipero Serra and his brave coadjutors, when even old California was new, yet it was beautiful still.

Within hearing distance, Carlos began his screeching again, spreading the news he carried. Gowned frailes raised hands and gave signs of blessing as he passed, neophytes screeched at him in reply. For he did not stop at the mission, but rode on along the highway that went to Pala, up toward the hills, until he could see the great rancho where Luis Baldarama lived and ruled, and the cluster of adobe houses where dwelt superintendent and overseers and the scores of neophytes and gentiles who labored in fields and on grazing-lands.

It was peculiar in some ways, that rancho, for old Luis Baldarama was a peculiar man. No man or woman lived there except he or she worked for Baldarama. There were rough men in plenty, both white and red, who worked like beasts for the joy of accomplishing hard tasks for the employer they admired, who ate abundantly and drank hard of wine at times, and gambled frequently, and fought each after his own fashion.

But there were no rough women there, such as were to be found at many a rancho, purposely ignored by owners. Wives and mothers, daughters and nieces, both white and red, those were the women. And few they were for the number of men, and respected, and treated very much like superior beings. Luis Baldarama demanded such things.

Carlos redoubled his efforts now that the goal was in sight. A mile from the rancho house he began screeching at regular intervals—a peculiar, piercing shriek that every man and woman on the rancho knew. He saw them running from the adobe houses and huts and gathering near the gate in the fence that surrounded the rancho house. They did not know, those men and women of Baldarama, whether he brought news good or ill.

He saw men leaving the sheep-pens and sauntering down toward the gate, and knew they were trying to appear unconcerned while anxiety consumed them. He fancied that on the veranda of the house he could see a tall, broad-shouldered man whose white hair came almost to his shoulders—Luis Baldarama himself, eager to know the news Carlos, the half-wit, carried.

"Hah!" he screeched. "Who is the important man now? Not Selistino Vargas, the superintendent, nor even Luis Baldarama himself. 'Tis Carlos, the fool, on whose words the people wait. Hah!"

Fully fifty persons were gathered near the gate now, and a hundred more, he knew, were cursing because they could not leave their work. A dozen frightened children huddled near their mothers, less afraid of Carlos than of his screeching.

Twenty feet from the opened gate he pulled back on the halter rope, swung the mule half way off the road, sat sideways, and grimaced at them.

"A fair morning, men and women of Baldarama!" he cried. "Is this reception for me or the news I may carry? By the saints, you can not have the one without the other! Hah! You scowl, Señor Selistino Vargas, the superintendent—you shall wait for your news!"

HE RODE on to the gate and sprang to the ground as willing hands grasped the halter and led the exhausted mule away. Laughing in their faces, he started to dash up the slope, but Selistino Vargas put out a hand and stopped him.

"What news do you bring?" he demanded in a harsh voice.

"What news I bring, Señor Selistino Vargas, is for the ears of Luis Baldarama and not for his superintendent," the half-wit replied.

"A word, you fool—say a word!"

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"Let the word be that Audre Baldarama, big son of a big father, comes by mid-afternoon with all his ruffians."

"All?" Vargas replied.

"All—though there be three or four somewhat cracked in the head or sore in the shoulder. There is one Antonio Florez who has a blade-cut across his handsome face, and another with a ball in his thigh. There are men who were strong and now are weak from loss of blood. As for the rest—you had best wait until I tell Luis Baldarama my news."

He shook off Vargas's hand and dashed on up the slope, screeching in glee.

It was as he had imagined—Luis Baldarama himself stood on the veranda of the rancho house, his arms folded across his breast, his great shoulders thrown back, his white hair in relief against the dark green of vines behind him.

No word did he speak as Carlos hurried up the slope toward him, nor did he betray impatience when the youth stumbled and fell among the dusty weeds and stopped to brush off his ragged clothing before continuing to the veranda.

Carlos did not shriek his delight now, for this was an important occasion. Big Audre Baldarama had chosen him messenger to Luis Baldarama, his father, and Luis Baldarama was king of a thousand broad acres and a village, to be approached in a spirit of proper humility.

"Well?" Baldarama demanded, looking down at the boy. "I heard you screeching your head off four miles away. No doubt at the mission they think it another Indian uprising and are preparing for defense. You have a message for me, I suppose?"

Señor Baldarama was anxious for that message, and he wondered at the messenger. He had heard no word of what Carlos had told Selistino Vargas. The presence of the half-wit might mean that Audre and his ruffians had met with grave disaster, or that Carlos had ridden his mule ahead to shout of victory.

"Big Audre Baldarama," said the half-wit, measuring his words, "bade me say to Luis Baldarama, his father, that all was well."

"Those are good words, by the saints!"

"If Luis Baldarama will let me think but a moment, there is something else. I have but half a brain, as Luis Baldarama knows."

"The best messenger my son could find is a man with half a brain, then? Dios!"

"Not the best, Luis Baldarama, but the swiftest."

"True! The saints protect the half-wit when he rides his wild mule. Speak on!"

"I think I have it now, Luis Baldarama. Big Audre, your son, said to say to you that there would be no further trouble in the neighborhood of Santa Barbara with certain Indian gentiles who desired to take scalps. The most of them have graves or cuts or bullets and none of them any taste for further fighting. He bade me say, also, that all the ruffians would ride here with him, and that a feast this night would be well, in celebration of the victory."

Luis Baldarama threw back his head and roared with laughter. He had been more anxious than he had cared to admit, and relief came to him from the half-wit's words.

"He shall have the feast," Baldarama promised. "You may tell those you meet, there will be a feast for all tonight at the rancho house. As for yourself, Carlos, there'll be enchiladas until you can eat no more, and if any man steals as much as a bite from you I'll run him through with my own blade."

He laughed again and whirled toward the doorway, already bellowing his orders to those within. Carlos turned and ran down the slope.

The half-wit could see that already his news was having an effect. Here and there were groups of men talking loudly and slapping one another on the back. Some were hurrying to the sheep-pens to carry the news there. Audre Baldarama was returning with all his ruffians; he was returning victorious from the north; details were to be heard later, but the news of success was not to be doubted. Carlos, the half-wit, had hurried ahead to bring it, and he did not have sense enough to lie.

But Carlos did not take time to be gratified by this momentary fame. He hurried along a path behind a row of adobe houses until he reached a building larger than the others and far from the rancho house. Hiding behind a clump of brush he listened for a time, to make certain that no man's voice could be heard. To his ears there came only the soft low song of a woman.

"Erolinda Vargas!" he called in a low tone. "Little Erolinda Vargas!"

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THE song ceased. An instant, and little Erolinda Vargas stood in the rear door of the adobe house, shading her eyes with a hand and peering in the direction from whence came the call. One hundred pounds of vivacity was Erolinda Vargas, with a song always bubbling from her lips, her black eyes always snapping either with laughter or anger, her heavy black hair falling in cascades over her shoulders and making a background for her white throat and dimpled face.

"Erolinda Vargas!" Carlos called again, and slipped from behind the brush to stand before her. "Is it safe now?"

"It is safe now, Carlos," she said. "The father will not come home until the midday meal."

"Hah!" he cried. "Hah! I saw him down by the gate, and how he did scowl at me and ask me for news! He would wring my neck, that father of yours!"

" 'Tis but his way, Carlos. He is stern and cruel."

"And why do not you ask me for news, Señorita Erolinda Vargas? You do not care, I suppose, whether big Audre Baldarama whipped the hostiles in the north. I suppose you do not care if his head has been split open and his scalp taken——"

"Carlos!" There was something of pain in the cry, and the half-wit felt a tug at his heart-strings, knowing he had caused it.

"I beg your pardon, Erolinda Vargas, for I would not hurt you," he said. "Audre Baldarama returns this mid-afternoon, safe and sound, and there is to be a feast at the rancho house tonight in his honor—a feast for all. Luis Baldarama himself told me. So put on your prettiest dress, little Erolinda Vargas. The men will make much of Big Audre, but there'll be but one woman. Eh, Erolinda Vargas? There'll be but the one woman for big Audre Baldarama. And now, if you have, say, but half a portion of enchiladas——"

"You shall have a whole plate of enchiladas, Carlos, for your news. But you must eat them some place where the father will not see. He said I was to give you no more for fear you might eat yourself ill."

Carlos took the food, waved his hand, and ran away along the row of huts. Little Erolinda stood in the doorway, the smiles gone from her pretty face.

"But there *is* more than one woman," she whispered to herself. "And may the good saints grant that the heart of Audre Baldarama be not turned toward the white-faced girl in the rancho house!"

CHAPTER II

TEARS

MID-AFTERNOON it was, when a big dust-cloud appeared down the highway toward the mission. A watching neophyte gave forth a screech of welcome, and men and women ran down toward the gate. The dust-cloud came nearer, and presently broke so that men and horses could be seen, and to the ears of those at the rancho came a chorus of cheers from the riders.

At the gateway, Audre Baldarama dismounted, and his men after him, to pick him up and carry him on their shoulders up the slope toward the rancho house, where a white-haired man waited on the veranda. Women whose husbands had been with Audre in the north shrieked their welcomes. News was passed around that there was to be no more work this day, and that at night there was to be a feast to which every man was to bring an empty belly.

At the edge of the crowd stood little Erolinda Vargas. There had been no chance to get where Audre could see her, without appearing unmaidenly. He was a man's man now, a man of strength to whom all other men paid homage. He would be a man of tenderness, ready to look into a woman's eyes, after he had refreshed himself and told his father the story.

Little Erolinda smiled as she hurried back to her father's house, and when she entered it and went about her work she sang again.

"He will come soon," she whispered to herself. "Even if he can not leave the rancho house this afternoon, I shall see him at the feast tonight. If it were not for my father we could walk home in the moonlight."

She could not guess what attitude her father would take. There had been no time to talk the matter over with him. It was only the night before he rode away that Audre Baldarama had held her in his arms for a moment and whispered that he loved her—big Audre Baldarama who

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could hold her almost straight out with one hand.

Her father, superintendent of the rancho, almost worshiped Baldarama the elder, who had picked him up from the gutter and made him a man. How, then, could he object to his daughter's marriage to Luis Baldarama's son? Surely there could be no objection, Erolinda told herself.

She had been busy since receiving the half-wit's news. Her one white dress had been washed and ironed, and a faded blue ribbon fastened to it, and she had got out her only pair of shoes and greased them well, for they were stiff from not being used. She could not go to the rancho house in moccasins, of course. A bunch of poppies gathered in a tiny cañon half a mile away were in a bowl, to be worn with the white dress. She had seen Audre Baldarama pick poppies, she remembered, while other men laughed at him for doing it.

In her white dress and wearing her shoes, and with the poppies pinned at her breast, she would enter the rancho house with her father, and Audre, looking up, would see her. Then his eyes would flash, and he would cross the room to take her hand before all the people. It would be embarrassing, certainly, yet she would feel proud.

So little Erolinda Vargas worked and sang as the shadows lengthened and the afternoon drew to an end, and now and then glanced through the door and along the path, looking for one who did not come.

"He will be busy at the rancho house telling his father the story," she whispered to herself. "That is his first duty, of course. Perhaps he even is telling Luis Baldarama of Erolinda Vargas, whom he wishes to take to wife. At least, I shall see him at the feast tonight!"

Now the night sounds were beginning to come from the cañon and up the valley from the distant sea, and it was growing dusk, and Little Erolinda began thinking of her father. He had been home at midday for a few minutes, then had rushed back to the sheep-pens where men were shearing. She did not know whether to get ready the evening meal, or whether her father would rather go to the feast a hungry man.

Yet she built up the fire and put water on to boil and got meat and fish ready. The white dress was spread across the foot of her father's cot, and the water on the poppies had been changed, and Little Erolinda, standing before a bit of mirror nailed in a corner of the room, experimented with her mass of dark hair, wondering whether it should be brushed back stiffly or allowed to wave in its natural manner; she liked it much better the latter way.

Men were hurrying along the path now, going to their huts and houses to put on their best clothes and get their proud womenfolk ready for the feast. A heavy step sounded just outside the door, and little Erolinda Vargas whirled around from the mirror, half ashamed at being caught before it, to find her father standing there.

"Have you no modesty or shame, señorita," he asked, "that you stand before a mirror and stare at your pretty face?"

His tone chilled the heart of little Erolinda Vargas a bit, and she hurried to the table and pretended to be arranging the dishes on it. Her father went to a corner of the room where there was a smaller table, and there he wrote at his reports, which he finished religiously each evening, so that Luis Baldarama could know how things stood at any hour.

Once or twice Little Erolinda glanced at him as she hurried preparations for the evening meal, but there seemed nothing unusual in his manner. He was cold and gruff and stern, this father, and not to be understood at times.

"The news was good?" she asked finally, and timidly.

"Concerning what, señorita?" her father demanded.

"The matter in the north, concerning which Audre Baldarama and his ruffians went on a journey."

Vargas turned and looked at her a moment, but she pretended to be busy and did not meet his eyes.

"Being a daughter of the rancho and also of its superintendent, it is fitting you should be interested, to a certain extent," he said. "You knew, of course, that there was an outbreak of hostile Indians in the neighborhood of Santa Barbara and that the soldiers at the presidio there needed help. Audre Baldarama rode at the head of fifty picked men to reason with the hostiles. It is enough to say that the Indians were defeated, and that Audre Baldarama and his ruffians won honor in the fighting. His father will reward him."

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There was quiet for a moment, then Erolinda spoke again.

"The meal will be late," she said as if wishing to change the subject. "Knowing there was to be a feast at the rancho house, I was not sure whether you would eat at home."

"Some amount I shall eat, though I must attend the feast. It would not be gentle for the superintendent of the rancho to refuse his presence at a feast in honor of his employer's son."

"There will be music and dancing?" asked Little Erolinda.

"As to that, I do not know. And how can it concern you, señorita?"

Erolinda turned and faced him now, fear clutching at her heart an instant. Selistino Vargas met her gaze, and something in her face caused him to peer around the room. He arose and got a candle and lit it at the fire, and put it in the center of the table and looked around the room again.

"The white dress—" he began.

"I washed and ironed it this afternoon, my father. Is it not pretty now, and clean? And I have greased my shoes well, so that they do not squeak. The blue ribbon may be folded in such manner that the faded part does not show——"

"And why this vanity?" he demanded.

"Would my father, the superintendent, have his daughter go to the rancho house looking like a squaw?"

"I have not said you are to go to the feast."

Fear clutched at her heart again, but she pretended to laugh.

"Of course you have not, my father, having been so busy this day that you did not have time to speak to me. But I assumed as much, since the feast is for all, and in honor of Luis Baldarama's son."

"You assume too much," he said.

"I am not to go?" she faltered.

"Not in your white dress and shoes, to eat and dance and look at men," he replied.

"But I worked so hard to make the dress fit, my father, and I am sure it will look as well as that of any woman, excepting, perhaps, that of Isabella Chavez, the white-faced rich girl whose father is visiting Luis Baldarama."

Vargas whirled upon her, suspicion in his face.

"We are playing at words!" he said sternly. "It were better we had an understanding. Sit at the end of the table."

Erolinda's smile fled, but she did as her father ordered, and looked up at him with sober face that reflected the sudden dread she felt. Selistino Vargas stood before her, his great legs far apart, his great fists against his hips, and his eyes gleamed beneath their shaggy brows.

"It has come to my ears," he said, "that Erolinda Vargas has been raising her eyes to the son of Luis Baldarama. Have you no shame, señorita?"

"Audre Baldarama stands six feet two, my father, and your daughter only five feet three. Did I look at the son of Luis Baldarama at all, most certainly would I have to raise my eyes."

"It is a straight answer I wish, not clever words. There is truth in what I said?"

"Perhaps I do not understand."

"There has been love between you and Audre Baldarama?" he demanded.

Little Erolinda's face was white now, and her breath came quickly, and she clutched at her breast with one hand. For an instant it seemed that the smiling face of Audre Baldarama came before her, and that she heard his voice bidding her be of good courage.

"There is this much truth, my father," she replied, "that the night before he rode away Audre Baldarama for an instant held me in those strong arms of his and told me of his love, and said that one day I was to be his wife. As for myself, I love him with my whole heart and soul, and rather than live without his love I would die."

SHE had got to her feet and was standing before him with her bosom heaving, and there were tears on her lashes. Selistino Vargas did not speak for an instant; then he threw back his head and laughed such a volume of sound that the dishes on the table rattled.

Had he cursed, had he been cruel, little Erolinda Vargas might have forgiven him, and things that happened afterward might not have happened; but what woman can forgive a man who laughs at her love?

"Attend!" he commanded. "Señor Audre Baldarama, son of Luis Baldarama, the owner of this great rancho, is not for Erolinda Vargas, daughter of that rancho's superintendent. Are you a fool that you dream it?"

"I am a good woman, and he loves me."

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"So simple, is it, señorita? There are other things to be considered. Does Audre Baldarama wish a wife who wears moccasins and never has been away from San Luis Rey de Francia?"

"I think he does, my father."

" 'Twas a moment's playing with him, merely. When he seeks a wife, he will seek higher. It amused the señor, perhaps, to say he loved you. Let us be thankful it was but the night before he rode away, else the name of Vargas might have been stained."

"My father!" Red rage flamed in her face now, and her hands were clenched at her sides. "Audre Baldarama is an honorable caballero, and your daughter is an honest woman, and always will be, though her father himself appears to doubt it!"

"This is nonsense and must cease!" he cried. "Audre Baldarama is to wed Isabella Chavez, daughter of the rich Miguel Chavez. At this moment they are at the rancho house on a visit, that Isabella and Audre may meet and learn to love each other. Luis Baldarama and Miguel Chavez have fought the wilderness from young manhood and built their fortunes, and it is fitting that those two fortunes should be joined through marriage. So lift not your eyes to Audre Baldarama, who is not for you. You are pretty and an honest girl, but must keep your place. Shall it be said that Luis Baldarama made me a man and prosperous, and that I rewarded him by letting my daughter wreck his plans?"

There was silence for a moment, during which the heavy breathing of little Erolinda Vargas could be heard. She had feared her father, but now love gave her courage.

"I know naught of plans and of joining fortunes," she said. "I know only that Audre Baldarama loves me, and I love him, and we shall be wed. And neither you, my father, nor Luis Baldarama himself, nor the white-faced Isabella Chavez and her wealthy father, can come between us. And I shall go to the big feast this night to see the man I love!"

This was open rebellion, a thing to which Selistino Vargas was not accustomed, neither from man nor woman. For a moment he only stared down at her, and she flinched mentally but not physically, from his gathering rage. Then he whirled around, turning his back upon her, and with one step reached the foot of the cot and caught up the clean white dress.

He looked at her again, then the dress was crumpled in one of his big hands, twisted out of all shape, hurled under foot and tramped upon; and great streaks of dust and dirt appeared upon its folds that little Erolinda Vargas had ironed so lovingly that afternoon.

Tears choked her, but she did not let them flow, being too proud to do so. Still and straight she stood, with her hands still clenched at her sides, and looked at her father with eyes that burned. He had grasped the blue ribbon now and was tearing it into strips. He picked up the shoes and hurled them to a far corner of the room, and then faced her again.

"So, señorita!" he cried. "You shall know that Selistino Vargas is master in his own house this day and every day, and you shall obey. You shall go to the rancho house tonight, but not in a white dress, Erolinda Vargas. Luis Baldarama spoke to me of you today concerning it. It is contemplated that the Señorita Isabella Chavez shall appear like a princess this night, in clothes fetched from San Francisco de Asis, to startle all and make Audre Baldarama proud to claim her. There was an Indian woman to aid in making her beautiful, but her hands were clumsy and she has been dismissed. Señorita Chavez needs a woman's dainty hands to aid her in dressing, and I have said you would be proud to help. You understand, Erolinda Vargas?"

It was a moment before Little Erolinda replied, before she comprehended the entirety of it; then rage and shame choked her.

"You would make of me a servant!" she cried. "You would have me help dress another woman, that she might be beautiful and win the heart of the man I love?"

"You shall aid Isabella Chavez; we are not speaking of men."

"And before I do that, my father, you may strike me down where I stand. I am not heiress to a great fortune and thousands of broad acres the good God made that man might prosper. But I am as good a woman as Isabella Chavez, and as beautiful, and have a heart as big. I hate her white face, and her clothes from San Francisco de Asis, and her wealth and her father. And to win the man I love, and to keep the

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love I know he has for me, I'll fight her, my father, or you, or any one in all the world with my woman's weapons!"

"Señorita——"

"I am the daughter of the rancho superintendent, and it is my right to go to the feast at the rancho house this night. I worked gladly this day to make myself presentable, and you have undone that work in an instant of time. So I can not go as a woman should, but I shall go in my common dress and my moccasins, and when the man who loves me sees me, he will not notice my costume, but will see only my eyes and the love they hold for him."

"Shame!" Selistino Vargas cried. "You throw yourself at a man who does not seek you! Already he has forgotten you. He has eyes now for none except Isabella Chavez."

"That is not true!" said Little Erolinda. "You can not make me believe it is true!"

"Did his eyes seek you when he rode in at the gate? Has he come along the path this afternoon to greet you?"

"He was busy with his father. He will come."

"Audre Baldarama or no Audre Baldarama, he shall not come here! I am a poor man, but I protect my daughter's good name. Since you have no duenna I must be stern in my guard of you. Audre Baldarama looks upon you only as upon a plaything. I have spoken, and there is an end of it. You drop foolishness, and go to the rancho house to dress the Chavez woman."

"I die first! And I go to the rancho house, but as a guest!"

"I'd tie you first, señorita! I'd lash you to the cot until the feast is over! You'll do as I say?"

"I am too proud, my father, to act the servant to a woman who is trying to steal the man I love. Not Luis Baldarama himself, nor you, nor all the world can make me do that!"

Vargas turned on his heel and strode into the other room for his new boots. For a moment Little Erolinda looked after him, then the corners of her mouth began to twitch, then the tears came into her eyes and flowed down her cheeks, and she slipped to the floor, burying her face in the crumpled folds of the disordered white dress she had worked so hard that day to clean.

CHAPTER III

"ILL WITH A HEADACHE"

THE rancho house was huge, with a veranda and a great patio, and had one big room that would hold a hundred persons at table, and office rooms at one end, and bechambers and kitchens at the other end and on the sides.

As dusk came, big Audre Baldarama sat in the office room across the table from his father. He had told his story and had been praised, and now was waiting for the hour the feast was to begin. Not a moment had he had to himself since coming from the highway that midafternoon, except to bathe and put on fresh clothing, and refresh himself after the dusty journey.

"You have proved yourself a man," Luis Baladarama was saying. "Many times you have proved it, by doing a man's work, by commanding other men, and by holding them loyal to you, not because you are the son of Luis Baldarama, but because you are Audre Baldarama who can make strong men like him. I am getting old, and it is fitting that, when I am called beyond, you step into my boots to continue the business I have created. You are twenty-four years old, you have breadth of shoulder, and muscle, and beard on your face; your eye is clean, and opens wide when it meets the eye of another man. In all the rancho district there is none other like you."

"This is too much praise, señor."

"It is not enough, for all that. I speak truth. I have kept you near me at the rancho and made a strong man of you, instead of allowing you to loiter around some presidio and waste your time. And now it is time for you to learn the remainder of the business: how to keep the books and handle superintendents and overseers, what we do with the grain and stock and wine and tallow; who purchases or exchanges it, and what he pays. It is time, also, for you to be a man in truth, and take unto yourself a wife. I would dance my grandchildren on my knee before I am called beyond."

Audre Baldamara looked through the window at the patio, and there was a smile on his face when he answered:

"I have been thinking of that, señor."

"It is well. No man can be complete until he has wife and children to call his own."

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"Then I have your permission to get me a wife?"

"Most certainly, my son. That is why Miguel Chavez is here with his fair daughter."

"I do not quite understand," said Audre, the smile leaving his face.

"Chavez and I came to California when there were few ranchos, except in the shadows of the mission walls. Here we founded our fortunes. We are kings in a way, are we not? I have a son; Chavez has a daughter. She is tall and straight, fair and strong, and of good health, and would make an excellent wife for any man. At San Francisco de Asis she has been taught things that fit her for any station in life. What better than to join the fortunes of Miguel Chavez and Luis Baldarama through marriage?"

"You would have me wed Isabella Chavez?" Audre asked.

"It is arranged," Baldarama said. "There should be some love-making first, I presume, some romance. I do not wish you to rush into marriage without the pleasure of a courtship, my son."

"And what does Isabella Chavez say regarding this, señor?"

"Nothing, so far as I know. I presume her father has mentioned the subject to her. She waits, it is to be supposed, for some evidence of affection on your part. A woman likes to be wooed, my son, even after she knows she has been won."

"It is your wish that I wed Isabella Chavez?"

"It is my wish," Luis Baldarama replied.

"Does the woman make such a difference, as long as she is good and honest, and I love her?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Suppose I already have learned to love a woman who is not Isabella Chavez?"

"I believed you were fighting in the north—not making love."

"True. But there are women here at the rancho, señor."

"Here? Scarcely half a dozen white women unmarried and of marriageable age."

"There is Anita Ferres, for instance."

"Hah! Honest, yes, but a fool who scarcely can speak her own name, and with no beauty!"

"And there is little Erolinda Vargas," said Audre. Perhaps he spoke in a softer tone, for his father glanced up quickly and narrowed his eyes.

"So? Little Erolinda Vargas!" he said. "Dainty, and pretty, and honest above all. But not for you, my son."

"If I say that I love her——"

"I will not listen to such foolishness! Chavez and I have set our hearts on this matter. You are jesting, my son, when you propose to go against my wishes."

"I am not jesting, señor," Audre said. "The night before I rode into the north I held Erolinda Vargas in my arms for an instant and said that I loved her and wanted her for wife. Would I be an honorable man if I wedded another woman after that?"

The eyes of father and son met, and they estimated each other, both reading opposition and stern qualities that would fight to the end.

"We will speak no more of it at present," Luis Baldarama said then, as he turned away.

"It is better to speak now and have an understanding," Audre returned. "There can be no objection to Erolinda Vargas, and I love her, and shall make her my wife. I do not wish to oppose you, my father, but in things such as this a man must be his own counsel. For Isabella Chavez there are a multitude of men in San Francisco de Asis and at other posts along El Camino Real. For me there is no woman except little Erolinda Vargas. With that understanding, my father, I am willing to speak no more of the matter at present."

"It rests with me whether you have riches or poverty after I am gone."

"At least I'll have two strong hands, my father, and the respect of men, and the love of the woman I love."

"I made Vargas; I can break him—drive him and his daughter away, far to the north."

"Not so far that I can not follow and find her," Audre said.

Baldarama considered a moment; this son of his had many qualities bequeathed him by his father, it was evident.

"We'll let the question drop for the present," he said. "This is to be a night of feasting and is not to be marred by a quarrel. We shall speak of this matter tomorrow without passion, and attempt an understanding. There must be no trouble between father and son."

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"I agree with you, señor; and there is my hand."

Baldarama, the elder, clasped it and looked his son in the eyes again as he turned toward the door.

"But you shall do me this service," he added. "Until we have talked further on this subject, it is my wish that you treat Isabella Chavez as a woman of her standing should be treated—with all due courtesy and kindness. It is not necessary that her father know what conversation we have just had."

"I shall treat her with all courtesy, since she is your guest, and you'll have no complaint to make in that regard," Audre promised.

Baldarama left the office room and hurried away. Audre remained sitting before the table, dreaming of Little Erolinda. It was too late now to go to the Vargas house, and within an hour the men and women would gather for the feast, and he could see her than.

Even now, in fancy, he could see her sparkling eyes and hear her merry laughter. Surely he could convince his father on the morrow that it would be best for him to marry little Erolinda Vargas. So he decided to remain in the office until the throng had gathered, for to go to the big room meant he would meet Isabella Chavez, and he did not wish to talk to her now.

LUIS BALDARAMA had left the rancho house, gravely acknowledging the salutes of the men he passed, and had made his way along the path behind the huts. It was growing dark rapidly, and already preparations were being made to light the great fire on the side of the hill before the house. In the air was the odor of roasting meat. At the end of the patio musicians were tuning and trying new airs.

Baldarama was on his way to the Vargas house, but before he reached it he met Selistino Vargas walking alone, his head bent, and his hands behind his back.

"The matter I mentioned this morning has been confirmed," Baldarama said. "I have been talking to my son, and he tells me that he loves your daughter. She is a pretty and honest girl, Selistino Vargas, and I ask you to know that I hold naught against her, for she is of blood good enough to mate with my son. But, as you know, I have other plans for him."

"It is understood, señor," Vargas said.

"Young love is a peculiar thing. In time both my son and your daughter will forget each other. It were best that we keep them apart for the time being, and his eyes will turn toward Isabella Chavez. Do you agree?"

"I agree, señor. My daughter spoke to me, also. I have told her that Audre Baldarama is not for her, and in time she will come to her senses."

"You are a good man, Vargas."

"She refused—I am ashamed to tell it—to go to the rancho house and help the Señorita Chavez."

"I am not sure that I do not honor her for it," Baldarama said. "Shall she be at the feast?"

"I have seen to it that she will not."

"And, if any one asks——"

"She is ill with a headache," Vargas said, giving the oldest woman's excuse in the world.

Baldarama clasped him by the hand and turned to lead him toward the rancho house.

"I say it again—you are a good man," he said. "If the two young ones could be convinced that they were mistaken in being in love——"

"I already have told my daughter that Audre Baldarama has forgotten her, that he has eyes for no woman except Isabella Chavez, else he would have made an effort to see her today. If he does not see her for some little time she will think I have spoken truth."

"Then we must keep them so occupied that they can not meet. We will go first to the office now, to wait while the crowd gathers. I say it a third time, Selistino Vargas—you are a loyal and good man!"

The fire was burning brightly when they reached the patio. There were cheers for Luis Baldarama, and for Audre, and for Selistino Vargas, the superintendent, for men will cheer any one when they are making merry. Baldarama led Vargas up the steps and through the great room to the office. There they found Audre sitting before the window, looking out at the fire.

"Selistino Vargas!" he cried happily, as they entered. "Then Little Erolinda is now in the big room?"

"No," Vargas answered, as Audre started for the door, and he spoke in a gruff voice. "She is not at the feast, Audre Baldarama. She is ill with a headache."

"Then I shall carry her a private feast!"

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"I will have it sent," Luis Baldarama said quickly. "It is not proper, my son, for a young man to visit a young woman at night when she is alone in her father's house."

CHAPTER IV

THE HALF-WIT SEES A KISS

"HAH!" cried Carlos, the half-wit. "Who is the man who brought the news that caused a feast? Answer me, señors! And enchiladas I am to have from Luis Baldarama himself—fat enchiladas I shall devour. Hah! By the saints!"

They shrieked at him in glee, the big men of the rancho and the ruffians, and hurled at him chunks of hard bread, which Carlos, with fingers at nose, dodged, and then darted into the rancho house for better security. At times the men of Baldarama were rough in their play.

The big room was full. Rough tables had been scattered throughout it, and now were heaped high with all the rancho afforded in the way of food. Huge roasts, fowls, baked fish, heaps of bread, great bowls of vegetables, fruits, and honey were being devoured by the men and women who sat there. In the patio and beyond were other tables heaped high with food, and here were the ruffians in a group of their own, and unmarried men of the rancho, content to feast in the light of the fire while their overseers and superintendents and the womenfolk feasted within, under the eyes of old Luis Baldarama.

But it was not Luis Baldarama these men cheered over their goblets of wine, but Big Audre, his son, who had led half a hundred of them up El Camino Real to aid the soldiers of Santa Barbara's presidio in quelling revolt.

Those who had followed Audre told of his feats of strength and daring. They related how he had singled out a chief and given him personal combat, making other men stand back when they would have aided. They told how he had held ground when even the soldiers retreated, driven the hostiles to their camp, burned it, scattered them, and promised them sudden death if they revolted again.

"He is a lion, that señor, when aroused," one of them said. "Once let his anger loose and those great hands of his itch to be at a throat. Hah! But, by the saints, he can be as gentle as a woman when he so desires."

"When he so desires," assented the others; and went on eating Luis Baldarama's food.

IT WAS a more conventional scene inside the rancho house. Luis Baldarama sat at one end of a long table, and with him were Miguel Chavez and his daughter, and Audre, and Selistino Vargas, with other superintendents and overseers, and their wives. Mindful of his father's request, Audre held conversation with the señorita with what interest he could, and told himself continually that the proud daughter of Miguel Chavez was no wife for him.

Then the feasting was over, and the musicians came in, and the men carried the big tables and piled them against the wall. Those in the patio crowded at doors and windows to look when the dancing began, then started rough sports of their own on the slope, wrestling and boxing, jumping and running, trying feats of strength.

Once Audre danced with Isabella Chavez, and once with another girl; and then he went to stand near one of the windows and look out at the fire, thinking of little Erolinda Vargas; and there Carlos, the half-wit, found him.

"Why does not big Audre Baldarama look cheerful when there is a feast in his honor?" Carlos demanded. "I know—'tis because one he wishes most to see is not here. 'Tis because little Erolinda Vargas can not dance with him."

"She is ill with a headache," Audre said.

"Then it came suddenly, Big Audre. Today I saw her, after spreading my news, and she was singing and her eyes were sparkling, and she gave me enchiladas—only you will please not tell her father that. She had no headache then, I swear to you, Big Audre. She winced with pain when I said maybe you had been hurt in the fight, and she was happy afterward when I told her all was well with you. All is not well at the Vargas house."

"What do you mean?" Audre demanded.

"When I saw Selistino Vargas come to the feast alone, after having a talk with your father, I slipped along the row of huts. Near the window of the Vargas house I listened, Big Audre. Did you ever hear a woman sob, eh? I heard one sob then, Big Audre, as if her heart was broken. I called

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to her—very low, of course, so that none other would hear—and her sobbing ceased, and I called again, but she did not answer. All is not well at the Vargas house."

"You talk too much," said Audre, and turned away.

But the half-wit's words had set him thinking. He began to doubt the headache story. That conversation between his father and Selistino Vargas might have been a plot. He wished now to slip away and go to the Vargas house to learn the truth, but his guests would miss him and his father be angry, and, moreover, it was as his father had said—not proper for a young man to visit a young woman at night when she was alone. If there was but some woman he could take with him——

He turned to look at Isabella Chavez just finishing a dance with one of the married men, and looking much disgusted. When she caught his eye she moved toward him through a maze of dancers, her duenna trying to follow, until she stood beside him in front of the window.

"It would be no more than polite, señor," she suggested, "for you to take me outside in the air and away from this present crush. I am tired of dancing for a time."

"There is a path at the end of the patio where one may enjoy the moonlight, señorita," Audre replied, and offered her his arm.

They went to the door, now wide open, and out on the veranda, nor cared that the duenna was lost where the throng was thickest. The crowd saw them, and the men raised a cheer. Audre waved them away as they crowded forward, and led the girl to the end of the veranda and down the steps to the path.

"How those men worship you, señor!" she said. "It is because you are strong and brave, I suppose."

"It is because I treat them as men," he explained. "Caballeros who follow me because they find me a good comrade, and men of the rancho who follow and fight because I am my father's son—I treat all as men good and true. At home there is a difference, but one man is as good as another when we ride to war. 'Tis fighting ability counts then, not accident of birth."

"You can treat a woman as a woman, too, I have heard. Audre of the big shoulders and tender heart—that is what you are called."

"Some persons say foolish things because they sound well, señorita."

She glanced at him, but he was looking ahead. There was much in Audre Baldarama for a woman to admire, and undoubtedly he was the sort of man to make a good husband. Just now, however, he seemed to be bothered about something.

"My father has told me," he said suddenly, "that it is intended we should be husband and wife."

So it had come, the girl thought. She glanced at him again, but he was not looking at her, neither did his arm tremble as he spoke, betraying nervousness.

"I believe our fathers have arranged something like that, señor," she admitted; and he noticed that her voice had suddenly lost its rich tone.

"And how do you regard the subject, señorita?"

She stopped and looked up at him, and now he faced her, and their eyes met.

"You are something of a man, Audre Baldarama," she said; "all that a man should be, in fact. Almost any woman would be proud to be your wife if she was sure of your love. So do not think that I undervalue you, señor, nor your father or blood. I value, too, the manner in which your father and mine fought their battles against the world at times when neither could trust another man. There is no reason, señor, why we should not have the same friendship for each other that our fathers have between themselves."

"That is true," he replied, and looked away again, knowing that what he intended doing would be harder now. Chavez had won his daughter to his way of thinking, evidently; she was ready to marry Audre Baldarama.

"You have beauty and grace and much learning, señorita," he told her boldly; "and I would have you know that in my eyes you are a woman much to be desired."

"But love?" she asked.

"Love is something apart," said Audre Baldarama. "What it is, I know not, yet it appears to come when one least expects it."

"Are you trying to say you love me?" she asked.

Audre reached out and took her hands, and he knew that her breasts were heaving, and she would not meet his eyes. Could it be possible that the girl loved him? He

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could not guess another reason for her emotion.

"You will please be kind enough to listen, señorita," he said, "and, perhaps, help me if you can? Nor think I feel any discourtesy toward you. I have said that you are a woman much to be desired. Had your father brought you to San Luis Rey de Francia four months ago, perhaps I should have loved you. But you were not here, and I looked at one of the girls of Baldarama. She is pretty, she is dainty, her laughter is like a song, Isabella Chavez. Her eyes dance when they meet mine until it seems that I must choke because of the emotion I feel——"

"Now you are trying to tell me you love some one else?" she interrupted; and the warmth was in her voice again.

"You must not misunderstand," he said. "I do not mean that you are unworthy of being loved, señorita—only that my heart was not my own when I met you tonight."

To his wonder, she laughed happily and swung back from him, then darted forward again and reached her hands to his shoulders, drawing down his head, and before he could know her purpose she had kissed him on the cheek.

"That is for the girl you love, señor," she said, laughing again. "And here is another, on the other cheek, for you yourself, because you love her. Those are friendship's kisses, Audre Baldarama, because you have made me happy. And now I expect two friendship kisses from you—one for the man I love, and one for myself for loving him. Do you understand, señor?"

"You love another man?" he gasped.

"As much, perhaps, as you love another girl. He is an officer at the presidio of San Francisco de Asis. The plans of our fathers were as distasteful to me as to you, Audre Baldarama. Not that I might not have been able to love you—but when I met you tonight my heart was not my own. And I was beginning to fear you intended asking me to be your wife."

"And I feared that perhaps you expected me to do so," said Audre, laughing himself now.

"So we will help each other," she said, "and remain firm friends?"

"I have need of help," Audre said. "The girl I mentioned is little Erolinda Vargas, daughter of the rancho superintendent. Her father would die for mine, and between them, I feel sure, they have kept her in her house tonight, perhaps telling falsehoods so that I could not meet her. Carlos, the half-wit, told me he passed the house and heard her sobbing. But, of course, I can not go there alone—there is her good name to consider, for she is alone, and it is night."

"Of course you could not," Isabella said.

"In the first place, I could not get away from the rancho house without my father suspecting, except that I took a walk with you, señorita."

Señorita Isabella forgot her breeding for the instant, and giggled.

"They think you are courting me," she said. "My father and yours nudged each other and laughed when we lost my duenna in the crowd and left the rancho house to take a walk in the moonlight. Were circumstances otherwise, I fear me you would suffer rebuke, and I'd be obliged to confess to my padre I had done that dreadful thing—had taken a walk in the moonlight with a man without a duenna tripping at my heels."

"And so they will be pleased if we remain away a short time," Audre added, "thinking we are getting well acquainted, and they will see that none runs after us to bother. And so——"

"And so," she said, reading his thought, "we could go to the adobe house of this Little Erolinda and ascertain the truth concerning her. Is that what you mean, señor?"

"You'll do it?" he asked.

"Indeed, señor! I only wish you could help me as much in my love affair. We'll join hands, Audre Baldarama, and fight our fathers in this matter. We could rebel, of course, and cause disagreeable scenes, but it would be best to use some strategy. And now you may give me that friendship kiss."

He stooped and kissed her awkwardly. Carlos, the half-wit, slipping noiselessly along the path, saw the kiss, and darted behind a clump of brush.

CHAPTER V

THE WOUND

THE path curved among the huts and houses, and Audre Baldarama and Isabella Chavez walked slowly, happy in their new-found friendship, and talking of things

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that pleased Big Audre, for Isabella was suggesting an elopement down El Camino Real to the mission at San Juan Capistrano, thus serving her own sense of romance and giving Audre dreams of happiness.

Now and then he stopped to throw rubbish aside, that her gown might not be caught and torn; and so they were some time covering the distance from the crest of the slope to the Vargas house; while Carlos, speeding through the shadows among the huts, arrived at the house soon, and once more stopped beneath the window to listen.

He heard the sobbing again, and it seemed that some one was knocking against the wall, as if in anger.

"Erolinda Vargas!" he whispered. "Little Erolinda Vargas!"

The sobbing ceased, but there came no answer. Carlos was certain that Selistino Vargas was at the rancho house, and so he felt no fear now. He slipped to the rear door and tried the latch, and found that the door would open, and so stepped into the back room of the house.

"Little Erolinda Vargas!" he called, louder now, wondering why she did not answer, and half fearing he had stumbled on a tragedy.

He thought that he heard another sob, but could not be sure. A glance through the window at the path told him no one was approaching. He found a candle, lit it from the fire, and glanced around the room.

Erolinda Vargas was not there, yet Carlos knew he had heard some one sobbing in the house. He stood in the doorway and shielded the candle-flame with one hand, and looked in the other room, but could see no one.

"Little Erolinda Vargas!" he called again.

Again there came a sob, this time from behind the door of a closet in a corner. Carlos put the candle on the table and ran to the door, and held his ear near a crack to listen. There was no more sobbing now, but he could hear a woman's deep breath. He opened the door.

Little Erolinda Vargas huddled in a corner of the closet, and turned a tear-stained face toward him.

"What are you doing there, Erolinda Vargas?" he asked. "Hah! And weeping, by the saints!"

"I am doing, I presume, what my father wishes," she replied.

"And why do you not come out, little Erolinda Vargas? They said at the rancho house that you were ill with a headache, but I knew they lied, for earlier this night I passed and heard you sobbing, and a señorita with a headache lies quiet, and makes no noise. I have fetched you half the enchiladas Luis Baldarama had them make for me, Little Erolinda, because you are good, and need a friend. The dancing at the rancho house has just begun, and your father will not be home for some time. So come out, Little Erolinda, and perhaps you will be kind enough to share even this half-portion of enchiladas with me."

"I should be very glad to come out, Carlos, were it possible."

"And why is it not, señorita? 'Tis the fashion, now, to huddle in the dark corner of a closet like a child afraid of evil spirits?"

He stepped nearer, and she bent her head in shame. Carlos ran back to get the candle, and by its light he saw why little Erolinda Vargas did not leave the closet. Her two hands were tied behind her back with a bit of rope, and from them ran another rope that was fastened around a rafter in the ceiling. And from her feet ran another rope to the rafter, so that Little Erolinda could do naught save crouch on the floor and sob, and kick her heels against the wall, and pound it with her tiny fists.

She sobbed now for shame as Carlos, sensing that here indeed was something wrong and ill, sat down the candle and removed the cap from his head, and stood looking at her.

"The father did that?" he asked.

"My father did."

"Because you gave me the enchiladas?"

"He knows nothing of that. It was because I wished to go to the rancho house to the feast."

"'Tis better to be untied, señorita," said Carlos, and stooped to the work. His fingers flew, and the knots were solved, and then he extended a hand and helped Little Erolinda to her feet and led her out into the room.

"We shall have a feast all of our own," Carlos said. "It will be better than the one at the rancho house, for there will not be so many persons. And I'll tell you all about the other feast, Little Erolinda. But first you must wash your face and dry your eyes, and get the laughter back into them."

He followed her to the other room and

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watched while she bathed her face and dried it on the coarse towel. But there was a look in the face of Erolinda Vargas that he never had seen before, for it was a woman-look of sorrow and shame.

"You must never tell how you found me, Carlos," she said.

"I'll never tell, Little Erolinda."

"Eat the enchiladas yourself, for really I am not hungry, though I thank you for remembering me. It is more than certain others have done. And now you may tell me what happened at the rancho house."

"They have a great fire on the slope," Carlos replied, "and all sorts of food to eat. The men wrestled and fought as usual, but there was not much drinking, for Luis Baldarama himself gave orders there should not be, thinking it would annoy the Chavez woman."

"She is very beautiful, I suppose."

"The Chavez woman? She had on a wonderful gown, señorita; but I do not like her as well as I like you. There is no song on her lips, or laughter in her eyes. And she refused to dance with Juan Fernandez, saying that his boots were too heavy."

"She danced with—others?" Erolinda asked.

"Hah! She danced the very first dance with Audre Baldarama, and they made a pretty pair, by the saints! Then she danced with some of the married men."

"And, Big Audre——"

"Big Audre was laughing all the evening, little Erolinda Vargas, except that once I saw him standing near a window and looking down in the heart. I told him I knew it was because you were not at the dance. He said you had a headache, and I told him that it was a lie. I tried to tell him just how I knew, but he said that I talked too much."

"Oh! He said that you talked too much?"

"Hah! Perhaps I do, Little Erolinda; but I have only half a brain and must talk twice as much as sensible folk to say as much as they. He meant no harm by it. He was thinking, and did not wish to be disturbed."

"And then he danced again?" asked Little Erolinda.

"Not he, señorita. The Isabella Chavez woman took him by the arm and they ran away from her duenna and went for a walk in the moonlight. I saw them as I started here with my enchiladas. Hah! That Big Audre is a devil with the women! I saw him kiss her——"

"Carlos!"

"Hah! But I did! They were standing in the path in the bright moonlight, like persons with turned brains, where any one who passed could see, and they were holding hands and looking happy. The Isabella Chavez woman laughed and said something, and then Big Audre stooped and kissed her, and they walked on. But they never saw me, little Erolinda Vargas. I slipped behind the brush with less noise than a shadow would make, and hurried here."

"You are certain he kissed her?"

"I may have but half a brain, señorita, but I know a kiss when I see one. It seems my poor mind has failed me again, little Erolinda Vargas, for I had thought you were the woman big Audre Baldarama loved. You see how easy it is to be mistaken?"

"Yes—it is easy—to be mistaken."

"And now that I have untied you and found that the headache was a lie, I had best run away before Selistino Vargas returns and finds me here and beats me. Hah! He does not like me, that father of yours, because I make fingers at him from the end of my nose. If you really are not hungry, Little Erolinda, I'll take back my enchiladas, for I do not know when I'll get more."

"Take the food, Carlos; I am not hungry."

"Were it better, do you suppose, to tie you up in the closet again, so the father will not know you have been loose?"

"You are to forget you found me so, Carlos. My father did right. He knew—things I did not!"

"But I have untied you, and you are not laughing, Little Erolinda."

"If you do not leave soon, my father may come home, and then he will take away your enchiladas."

Carlos picked up the food and his cap and hurried to the door; that threat did the work. He swung the door open and peered out, and instantly dodged back again.

"My father is coming?" Erolinda asked, seeing the look on the half-wit's face.

"No. It is big Audre Baldarama and the Isabella Chavez woman. They are coming here, straight to your house, little Erolinda Vargas. You will not tell them, please, how I saw them kiss each other, for Audre Baldarama is my friend, and I would

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not have him angry. Hah! How he did kiss her!"

He rushed through the house to the rear door, opened it, slipped out, and dodged around the nearest hut. Little Erolinda Vargas sat beside the table, waiting.

CHAPTER VI

REPARTEE—AND KISSES

THE sudden tumult of thoughts and emotions she experienced now startled Little Erolinda. First of all came her great love for big Audre Baldarama, born that evening before he rode away, and nourished during his absence by fear for his safety and hopes for his success against the hostiles of the North.

She told herself that she had read truth in his eyes that night, and that he belonged to her, yet now she acknowledged to herself that she knew little of men, and that perhaps their eyes lied at times.

There was the other side—her father knew men well, and he had told her Audre Baldarama considered her but a plaything, and would look higher for a wife. Her father had said that now he had eyes for none except Isabella Chavez, and that the marriage was as good as arranged. Doubtless her father had known, and had told the truth.

She wasn't exactly certain; and now Audre was coming to her father's house, and the Isabella Chavez woman with him, and she wondered how to receive them and why they came. He was flaunting his latest conquest before her, was he? He had come to inquire why she was not at the feast, so that she could see Isabella Chavez's gorgeous gown and soft shoes and tell herself she could not hope to hold the heart of a man against such another woman?

The frailes at the mission had educated little Erolinda Vargas, and she could speak and read and write well, but she knew little of women's practises in the outside world. To be open and honest was her idea of womanliness.

But Nature, who puts into the breast of every woman the arts of coquetry and repartee and self-defense to be used when love is at stake, came to aid her now. One of her ancestors had partaken of court intrigue in distant Spain, perhaps, and had bequeathed little Erolinda Vargas such things as indifference and scorn and polite interest and white lies, to be used as weapons when she willed.

So, when there came Audre Baldarama's knock upon the front door, little Erolinda Vargas placed the candle nearer the center of the table and walked slowly across the room to open the door, and start back in feigned amazement at what she saw.

"Good evening, Señor Baldarama," she said, looking at the woman with him questioningly. "Welcome to my father's house. He is not here to welcome you himself. I believe there is something at the rancho house this night that keeps him from home."

There had been a warm greeting on Audre Baldarama's lips, but it died before this. Wondering, he removed his sombrero and stepped into the room, Isabella Chavez still clinging to his arm.

"This is Señorita Chavez, Erolinda Vargas," he said; and the two women bowed coldly to each other, Erolinda because she pretended indifference, and Isabella Chavez because she felt a hostile atmosphere here.

"And are you not glad to see me, señorita?" Audre continued.

"I always am glad to welcome the men of Baldarama," said Little Erolinda, "especially when they do things of good report. I understand you were very successful in the North, and returned without the loss of scalp or blood."

"Now, by the good saints—" Audre Baldarama began; but Erolinda stopped the great oath he would have sworn.

"Will you not be seated, Señorita Chavez?" she asked demurely. "That chair at the end of the table is safe, I think. My father has taken our good furniture down to the mission to have it repaired. The young men of Baldarama have worn out our chairs the past month."

From the lips of Isabella Chavez rippled a little laugh. Being a woman, she recognized women's weapons when she beheld them, and though she did not guess the reason for their use here and now, she admired the way they were being wielded.

"These same chairs—" Audre began; but Little Erolinda stopped him again.

"You must sit on the end of my father's cot, Audre Baldarama," she said. "I trust you will be comfortable there. Pardon me if I am not gowned to receive guests, but I have had a headache afternoon and evening."

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"And so we did not have the pleasure of your company at the rancho house!" Audre got out his sentence that time.

"I understood from my father that there was to be something of a feast because of your safe return," said little Erolinda Vargas. "I grow tired of feasting, where the rough men drink and wrestle and fight and shoot at a mark. And a woman gets enough to eat at home."

"Erolinda—" the man began; and stopped.

This was not the timid little Erolinda Vargas he had known. He could not fathom her manner and her words. He had expected a rapturous moment with this little woman in his arms, words of love, an arrangement for a speedy marriage. Had he been alone and found her thus, it would have been difficult enough to say what now was on his mind; in the presence of Isabella Chavez it seemed impossible.

"You were saying—?" Erolinda asked.

"You do not appear any too glad to note my return."

"I was near the gate with the others when you arrived, Audre Baldarama, and did not note that you looked for my presence particularly."

"As to that, señorita, there was a certain turmoil that kept me busy for a time, and then I had the story to tell my father."

"Of a certainty, señor," Erolinda agreed. She turned to Isabella Chavez and asked with politeness, "And how do you like the path among the huts on a bright moonlight night?"

Now that the batteries were turned upon herself, Isabella Chavez prepared to fight back, not knowing the cause of war, but determined to do better than had Audre Baldarama.

"It is very beautiful," she replied. "You often have walked it, no doubt, during the past month, with the young señores who wore out your father's chairs."

"Had I done that, the path would be wider now," said little Erolinda Vargas. "A crowd of young señores tramp down the brush and weeds so at the sides. And it is better to walk in the moonlight with one man alone. When a girl has so many admirers that she can not get a moment with one alone, it is a sad case."

"It is!" said Audre; and his face grew red, and he felt uncomfortable. There also was a trace of anger in his manner, and the heart of little Erolinda Vargas exulted. But he tried once more to be in earnest, to discover what had changed Erolinda. "I am sorry you did not come to the rancho house tonight," he said. "I had expected a dance, a word or two. Those other young señores you mention, who wore out your father's chairs—they were all at the rancho house."

He had scored for a moment, and all three of them knew it.

"So I have had an evening to myself, thanks to your feast," said Little Erolinda. "Men grow tiresome."

"But the one man—" suggested Isabella Chavez.

"There is no one man—yet."

"Erolinda Vargas!" Audre Baldarama's voice rang with desperation and love. "There should not be this sort of talk between us, señorita. Why did you not honor us with your presence at the rancho house? There was really a headache?"

"Does a woman tell falsehoods concerning such things?" Erolinda asked archly.

Audre Baldarama knew there had been no headache, knew the disposition of Selistino Vargas, and guessed at the truth. His heart told him that Erolinda had intended being at the rancho house that evening, and that now she was refusing to explain because of the presence of Isabella Chavez, and because of her pride. He could tell she had been weeping recently, and he looked about for evidences of the truth.

There was the soiled white dress still upon the floor at one end of the cot, and on it was the dusty footprint of Selistino Vargas, and the marks of his grimy fingers. There was the torn blue ribbon, and the shoes in the corner.

Audre Baldarama, forgetful of the Chavez woman, stooped and picked up the white dress. He saw its patches so neatly mended, saw that it had been washed and ironed fresh that very day, and afterward soiled. He turned and faced her with tenderness and love in his countenance, but Little Erolinda refused to meet his eyes.

"If you have been treated cruelly—" he began.

Little Erolinda knew that Audre had guessed the truth, but her pride came to her again, and she refused to let him pity her before this other woman.

"That dress?" she asked. "It is an old thing I got out, intending to rip it up and make a rag doll for Pedro Fernandez's little

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girl. Just throw it in the corner, please."

As she spoke, she remembered how she had mended and washed and ironed, and for what purpose, and tears she could not check came into her eyes. Audre Baldarama knew well that the white dress was the only one little Erolinda Vargas possessed, in addition to the frocks of coarse material she wore every day. He wished he could be alone with her a short time and get at the truth, knowing she would not speak while Isabella Chavez was within hearing, but he did not know how to manage it.

Isabella Chavez's heart began bleeding for these two lovers whose romance had gone awry; moreover, she wanted to see the proper culmination of this affair so that her own would be safe. She knew from her womanly instinct that little Erolinda Vargas was smarting from some fancied wrong, but the girl would not meet her half way, and she felt unable to get at the truth. It was Audre Baldarama's place, she thought, to make a plain statement of fact.

Little Erolinda choked back her tears bravely and attempted a smile, but she could not take her eyes from the soiled white dress. She felt that her dream had turned nightmare. She wanted to be in Big Audre's arms, yet she remembered the kiss Carlos had said he had seen.

It came to her suddenly that she had been wronged, and that Audre Baldarama had not the right to bring this other woman here to her father's house after being unfaithful. The sight of the dress aroused her, and she ceased her repartee and her attempts at guile.

"I will speak the truth, Audre Baldarama," she said, suddenly standing up before them. "That is my only good dress, and it is not very good—as you can see. This morning when Carlos brought the news of your coming I mended and washed it and ironed it, and got out the best shoes I had, and picked poppies to wear, because you love them so. I was singing with happiness, Audre Baldarama, because the evening before you rode away to the North you took me in your arms and said you loved me and declared I was to be your wife some day. And I loved you, Audre Baldarama, for you are big and strong, yet as tender as a woman.

"So I sang as I mended the dress, and did not care if my face was flushed over the hot fire. I was beside the gate, yet you would not see me. I told myself you would come as soon as you had seen your father at the rancho house, but the afternoon passed and you did not."

"I could not get away," he said.

"It made little difference, for I told myself I would see you at the feast and there would be love in your eyes. Then my father came home and rebuked me, because he had learned in some manner of my love for you. It had been decided for you to wed Isabella Chavez, he said, that two fortunes might be joined. He said you had looked upon me as a jest——"

"Now by the saints!"

"He said that, and I told him it was not so. You loved me truly, I declared. Do you know what he told me then, Audre Baldarama? He said I was to go to the rancho house, but not in my white dress, and that I was to be servant for this Isabella Chavez, to help make her beautiful so she would take from me the man I loved. My own father told me to do that, señor. I refused, for I have some pride. I boasted that I would go to the rancho house in my white dress, despite him, and that, when you saw me, you would leave all others and come to my side. It does not pay to boast, it seems.

"Then my father soiled the dress I had worked so hard to have white and clean. He tore my blue ribbon and threw my only pair of shoes in the corner. And when he went to the rancho house, he tied me in the closet there, like a hound, and left me to sob and wait for you—and you did not come."

"Little Erolinda!" Audre cried.

"Wait until I have finished. Carlos, the half-wit, came and found me and untied me. And then you came, with this Isabella Chavez woman, to make mock of me and my poor home and poor clothes, and I tried to be brave and mock you back. But I am not that sort, it seems, for I can do it no longer. You came to me, with another woman's kisses warm on your lips——"

"Erolinda Vargas!"

"Carlos saw you! In the path, in the bright moonlight, you held hands and kissed, he said. Is it not the truth? I can see it is—I can read the truth in this woman's eyes. So please to leave my father's house, Audre Baldarama, and take this woman with you, for it appears my father was right, and that you considered me naught but a jest!"

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ISABELLA CHAVEZ was upon her feet now, and had started forward.

"That explains it all," she said. "Tell her, Audre Baldarama—tell her the truth!"

"Can Audre Baldarama tell the truth?" cried little Erolinda Vargas. "He said once he loved me."

"And does yet!" Audre cried. "Loves you and no other woman, little Erolinda Vargas! This past month in the north I have longed for you, and what happened this day I could not avoid, though I was wishing every minute to be with you."

"Nor could you avoid the kiss in the moonlight, it seems."

"You do not understand, Erolinda Vargas. It was a kiss of friendship——"

"Men do not kiss women because of friendship!"

"Of happiness, then, of joy—what you will! But not for love, Little Erolinda. Of joy, perhaps, because Isabella Chavez and myself had reached an understanding. I had told her of my love for you, and she had been glad, because she loves an officer at San Francisco de Asis, and no more cares to wed me than I her. And she had promised to help me against our three fathers, that I might have you for a wife and she could then have her officer for a husband. We were glad to have agreed, Little Erolinda, and so I kissed her."

"That is the truth, señorita, and I asked him for the kiss—of friendship," Isabella Chavez said.

"So you beg kisses from men? Never have I done that!" Erolinda cried. "As for your story—I do not believe it! You will please leave—my father's house."

She sank into the chair at the end of the table and buried her head on her arms, and now she sobbed loudly, nor cared if the Isabella Chavez woman heard and saw. Audre Baldarama would have sprung forward toward her, but Isabella Chavez held him back and motioned him toward the door, and they went out and left little Erolinda Vargas alone.

"Big Audre Baldarama, you are an imbecile," Isabella Chavez whispered outside. "I know women, my friend. Go back alone, and do not try to argue, but take her in your arms; let her fight if she will, but hold her close and kiss her—and kiss her! Tears and anger must be kissed away. I shall wait outside and see the moonlight, and may the saints bless you both and speed our plans!"

So Audre Baldarama entered the house again, slowly and on tiptoe, and made his way across the room to where Little Erolinda was weeping. Suddenly Erolinda felt strong arms lift her off her feet and clasp her, and felt kisses being rained on her wet face.

She opened her eyes to see Audre Baldarama, and with her tiny fists she beat at his face, but he only laughed and kissed her more. And then he sat down and held her in his lap, and she ceased beating him, but continued to weep.

"I love none but you, little Erolinda Vargas," he said in a husky voice. "Never before did I kiss a woman like that! Believe me, Little Erolinda—you must believe!"

And Little Erolinda, snuggling closer, ceased her weeping and returned his last kiss, and gave him a woman's secret straight from her heart.

"If you had taken me in your arms—and kissed me so—when first I grew angry—I would have been very happy," she said.

CHAPTER VII

"WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?"

"MAY I come in now?"

It was five minutes later, and the voice was that of Señorita Chavez, and she stood in the doorway smiling at them and laughing a little aloud when she saw their embarrassment. Little Erolinda Vargas sprang down from Audre Baldarama's knees and crossed the room to stand before Isabella Chavez and take her hand.

"You will forgive me for the things I said, señorita?" she asked. "I did not understand then, and believed you were trying to win him from me."

"Surely, I forgive you," Isabella answered, and stooped to kiss her. "A woman can not be blamed for using weapons at her command when love is at stake, and I presume the affair of the kiss did appear a black one to you. Have you and Audre Baldarama concluded your plans? Audre and I have been quite a time from the rancho house, and we shall be missed, and I have a reputation of my own to protect. People think we have been this long time walking in the moonlight."

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"Plans?" questioned Little Erolinda, looking at Audre.

Then he went forward and took her two hands again, and looked deep into her eyes as he spoke in a low voice.

"There is but one sure way, Little Erolinda," he said. "Our fathers might find some manner of stopping our wedding unless we act quickly and defeat their schemes. This Isabella Chavez has suggested that we slip away just before daybreak, and on horses hurry down El Camino Real to the mission at San Juan Capistrano, where there is a good padre I know will wed us. Safely wedded, we can send back word and after a time return to be happy and live here. Then our fathers, being unable to do else, will forgive us, and Isabella Chavez can wed her officer at San Francisco de Asis. Say that you will, Little Erolinda, for my heart is bursting with love for you."

Erolinda stepped back and looked at him a moment, pretending to consider, but it was only another trick of love, to make the man who sought her tremble with fear and anxiety for a time. And finally she rushed forward to him again and hid her face against his breast, while he stooped to kiss her curly head and stroke her hair, knowing he had received the answer he desired.

"There is small time to be lost," Isabella Chavez said. "Once you are on the highway and have a good start, there will be ample time for love-making. It appears I am the only practical person in this house."

"I have a plan," Audre said. "We'll take Little Erolinda to my adobe house on the crest of the hill, and make her comfortable in the back room. Then you and I must return to the rancho house, Isabella Chavez, so our fathers will not be suspicious. I'll find Carlos, the half-wit, and he shall help me by getting horses ready while I procure some cold food.

"Three hours from now, when the merriment at the rancho house is at its height, I'll manage to slip away and return to the adobe house, and then we'll start along the highway. By the time our absence is discovered we'll be far away, and they'll not know whether north or south."

"It is an excellent plan," Isabella said. "As for myself, I shall give you a bundle for Little Erolinda, and when she opens it she will find something that will make her forget the loss of her pretty white dress. I wish it were my officer from San Francisco de Asis running away with me!"

Big Audre had not lived at the rancho house before riding to the north, but had a smaller structure at the crest of the hill, where he could entertain the men who adored him, and whom he led. He had desired it, and his father had made no complaint, insisting only that Audre eat his meals at the rancho house the greater part of the time.

It was a pretentious building of two rooms and red tile roof, the floors covered with imported rugs and Indian trophies, and with a great fireplace before which the men often gathered to drink wine and tell stories of the highway and the missions.

So they left the Vargas house, the three of them, little Erolinda Vargas snuggling close under Big Audre's arm and Isabella Chavez walking a little way ahead. The night air was chill, for a fog had rolled up the valley from the distant sea, and not far from the house they stopped while Audre ran back to fetch a shawl that had belonged to Erolinda's mother, and which hung in the closet. Erolinda and Señorita Chavez walked on, keeping to the shadows where they would not be seen from the path if any man or woman happened to be strolling that way.

Audre was quite a time in the house, for there were things there Erolinda loved, and Audre knew it, and he made a bundle of some of them and carried it with him along with the shawl, after extinguishing the candle and latching the front door. As he left, he was seen by one of the men of the rancho, who was carrying food from the feast to a sick child, and who wondered why Audre Baldarama was slipping from the Vargas house with a bundle; but Audre did not know he was observed.

He caught up with the others and they hurried to the building on the crest of the hill. There was no time to be wasted, so Audre put Little Erolinda quickly in the rear room and made her comfortable, then hurried back to the rancho house with Isabella Chavez, but not until he had held Erolinda in his arms for a moment and whispered that within a short time they would be alone together, riding down El Camino Real, toward the mission and the priest.

Audre and Isabella Chavez had not been

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missed except by their fathers and the girl's duenna. For the merriment was at its height, and when they entered the rancho house again, walking slowly and talking together as if much interested in each other, Luis Baldarama and Miguel Chavez merely smiled and thought things were going well.

Audre left Isabella with some of the other women and approached the table before which his father sat. He felt forced to sit down and talk for a time, yet was anxious to be making his arrangements but it would not do, he knew, to make his father suspicious.

" 'Tis a fine night for a walk in the moonlight," Luis Baldarama observed.

"It is, indeed, a fine night," Audre agreed.

They continued to talk, until Audre saw Isabella Chavez slip from the big room, and knew she had gone to prepare the bundle for Little Erolinda. Then Luis Baldarama called for more wine and filled three goblets.

"We drink to your happiness, my son," he said.

"With all my heart," Audre answered; and the three men raised their goblets and drank.

Others crowded around the table to pay their respects to Luis Baldarama, and Audre got a chance to walk aside with some of the men, and presently to leave them and search until he found Carlos outside at the end of the veranda.

"You wish more enchiladas?" Audre asked.

"I always wish for enchiladas, big Audre Baldamara."

"Do as I say and you'll have some. I myself will get the food from the kitchen and hand it to you. I want two horses, mine own and another, saddled and bridled and tethered down by the gate."

" 'Twill take less than ten minutes, Audre Baldarama."

"Wait! You can keep a secret?"

"Having but half a brain, it is twice as easy for me as for most persons."

Audre Baldarama lowered his voice to a whisper and told Carlos as much as it was necessary for him to know. He knew Carlos could be trusted, since he worshiped Audre Baldarama and his father.

"Hah! So it is not the Isabella Chavez woman you love?" Carlos asked.

"Quiet! I do not want the entire world to hear!"

"And you will bring back the laughter to the eyes of little Erolinda Vargas?"

"The saints helping me, I'll do that!"

"I go for the horses, Audre Baldarama. Everything shall be ready when you are prepared to start. And may I, please, have the enchiladas now?"

Audre laughed and got up to go into the big room again, Carlos waiting beside the door. It was the habit of Audre to give enchiladas to the half-wit, and when he announced his intention to his father, as he passed the long table, Luis Baldarama laughed and said something to Miguel Chavez about the boy, in his happiness, wishing every one else to be happy.

He soon obtained the food and wrapped it in paper, so the men outside would not see it and make sport by trying to take it from Carlos, thus delaying him. He entered the big room again and started toward the long table, looking to see that Isabella Chavez had not returned. His father and Miguel Chavez were alone at the table now, for another dance had begun.

He glanced toward the doorway, and stopped, astonished at what he saw. Selistino Vargas had entered and was walking swiftly toward the long table. In his face was such anger and rage as Audre Baldarama never had seen before, and in his belt was a pistol, something Selistino Vargas seldom wore except when he traveled along El Camino Real or went back into the hills.

Luis Baldarama and Miguel Chavez looked their surprise, too, as Vargas came to a stop in front of the table, while Audre stood behind it. Carlos slipped near, eager for the enchiladas, but Audre, sensing that there was trouble come anew, waved him to one side for the present.

Vargas rested his hands on the table and looked across it, and when he spoke it was in a hoarse whisper, as if anger had partially paralyzed his vocal chords.

"AUDRE BALDARAMA," he said, "what have you done with my daughter?"

There was no respect in his voice, and the speech was a command for a quick answer. Audre straightened his shoulders as his father and Miguel Chavez got to their feet.

"Selistino Vargas, have you taken leave of your senses?" Luis Baldarama demanded.

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"There is rage in your face and a weapon at your belt, and you speak to my son as if he were an Indian neophyte who had done wrong."

"What have you done with Little Erolinda, my dauhter?" Selistino Vargas demanded again, looking Audre straight in the eyes.

In a flash, Audre saw his romance gone awry again; but he did not fully comprehend Vargas' rage.

"I returned to my house," Vargas went on, "to take my daughter something from the feast. She had been undutiful, and I had chastised her and wished to make amends. The house was empty—she was gone. I thought she was walking on the path, and searched, but could not find her."

"And are you insane," Luis Baldarama asked, "that, since you could not find her, you imagine my son had spirited her away? Audre Baldarama has been walking in the moonlight this past hour with Señorita Chavez, talking of such things as young people will."

"He left the rancho house with the Isabella Chavez woman, and he returned with her," Vargas said. "It does not follow that he was with her the entire time. And I have met a man who says he saw Audre Baldarama leaving my house with a bundle under one arm, and on the other a shawl that belongs to my household."

"You have indeed taken leave of your senses!" Miguel Chavez cried.

"I am a poor man, and Luis Baldarama made me," Vargas said. "I honor him, but I protect my daughter's good name. Before he rode away to the north, Audre Baldarama told my daughter of his love for her. She is not a plaything for any man, not even Audre Baldarama!"

"If the love-story was true—" Audre began.

"True? It is not true! It is intended you shall wed the Chavez woman, and because it is your father's wish I have told my daughter you are not for her. You have not opposed your father's wish, for you have looked with favor upon Isabella Chavez, and tonight on the path you kissed her—Carlos, the half-wit, saw it, and told it with glee to half the men in Baldarama.

"You would wed the heiress, and meanwhile play with the superintendent's daughter! You are up to devil's tricks with your big shoulders and your deep eyes and your tender ways with women. But I protect my daughter's name against the world. What have you done with her?"

The musicians were playing and the throng was dancing, and the words of Selistino Vargas did not carry far. To the others there seemed nothing unusual in this scene, for they could not see Vargas' enraged face.

Audre Baldarama's mind was in a state of bewilderment. To explain meant that his plans would be ruined, and he doubted if Selistino Vargas would appreciate the truth. He could give proof through Isabella Chavez, of course, but to give proof meant an end to his romance.

"What could I have done with her, madman?" Audre asked. "Do you think I have drowned her in the well?"

"You have a house on the crest of the hill," Vargas said. "Perhaps she is there now—stained. How do I know?"

Carlos' enchiladas fell to the floor. A roar of rage came from the throat of Audre Baldarama and he launched himself straight across the table at Selistino Vargas. But his father's great arms caught him, and Miguel Chavez added his strength, and the clash was avoided. For an instant they stood there, panting, and then Luis Baldarama spoke.

"Too many words have been passed for this business so to end," he said. "I believe you are a madman, Selistino Vargas, but we shall give you chance to show proof. I say to you that my son is an honorable man, and I believe your daughter to be an honorable and honest woman. You have seen fit to besmirch her with your insinuations. You have called into question the integrity of my son.

"We'll go to this house on the crest of the hill, the four of us, and until we get there you will kindly clear your face of its rage, so that other men will not suspect there is something wrong. If you prove my son false, either at his house or in an investigation afterward, then I will disown him as unworthy. And if you have lied, Selistino Vargas, and so stained the reputations of two persons, I'll have you whipped off the rancho like the dog you are, driven away from the mission, threatened with death if you ever return, and myself will take your daughter to be mine, and rear her in happiness far from an unworthy father like you! Lead the way, Selistino Vargas! The proof rests with you!"

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CHAPTER VIII

A LEAD MESSENGER

THEY kept to the shadows at the side of the patio so that the merrymakers would not notice them and think something amiss, and walked slowly up the side of the hill toward the house at its crest.

None spoke, for it was not a time for speech, and far too much had been said already. Selistino Vargas walked a few paces ahead, swinging his great arms at his sides, his jaw shot forward and grim determination in his manner. Behind him came the others, three abreast, Audre Baldarama in the middle.

Audre in all his life before never had known fear for himself, even in close quarters, either from man or beast, but now he felt fear for little Erolinda Vargas. It was on the tip of his tongue to begin speaking and tell the entire truth, calling upon Isabella Chavez and Carlos the half-wit to substantiate his words, but he considered that it would be better to wait.

Once at the house, with Erolinda at his side, he could put an arm around her and tell them what they had planned, and why, and ask for permission to ride down El Camino Real and wed her as he desired. Then her father would understand, and perhaps Luis Baldarama and Miguel Chavez would see that young love could not be driven, and give their consent.

Because he had been afraid some of the men of the rancho might enter the house, he had left Little Erolinda in the darkness of the rear room, and so, when they came near the building, no light came through the windows or under the door. Luis Baldarama made an angry sound deep down in his throat when he observed this, and promised himself what he would do by way of punishment to Selistino Vargas. No one could be allowed to mistrust a woman on the Baldarama rancho, not even that woman's father!

Vargas made straight for the front door, but Audre Baldarama went forward quickly and stepped before him.

"This is my house," he said. "You are welcome to enter, but I shall open the door."

As he spoke he opened it wide, and lit a candle that stood on the table in the center of the room. The others entered, Selistino Vargas first of all, and glanced around the room. There was the table, and there were chairs and stools, and a couch in one corner, and skins on the floor, and pictures on the walls, but there was no little Erolinda Vargas.

"Here is my son's house, Selistino Vargas," said Luis Baldarama, "and here your daughter is not, it seems. I trust you realize now to what your anger has brought you. Always did I think you to be an even-tempered man, but it appears I was mistaken after all these years. You have accused my son, an honorable caballero, and fouled your own daughter's name——"

"There is another room," Vargas interrupted.

Audre's heart was pounding at his ribs now. He had left Little Erolinda in that other room, for he had felt that she would be safer there. And the outside door of the other room was barred high up with such a heavy bar that Little Erolinda could not lift it, and the two windows were high in the wall and fastened on the outside by bolts through staples. So there was no way for Little Erolinda to leave the house and run back to her father's place, even if Audre Baldarama could stop Selistino Vargas long enough for her to attempt it.

"The other room is my kitchen," he said. "If you are satisfied, Selistino Vargas, we now will return to the rancho house and consider what shall be done with you."

"He shall be whipped from the rancho—" Luis Baldarama began; but Vargas cut him short again.

"I know the other room is your kitchen, Audre Baldarama," he said, ignoring the father. "But a woman has been in a kitchen before now. Is there anything in your kitchen you wish to hide?"

"There is nothing I wish to hide," Audre replied, "but you have insulted me enough as it is, señor, and I think when once we are away from here I shall draw blade and have satisfaction at your hands."

"However that may be, I intend entering your kitchen," Vargas retorted, and he drew his pistol from his belt and held it ready before him.

"Now, by the saints, this is going too far!" Luis Baldarama cried. "Is my son a coyote to be treated so? Put up your weapon, Selistino Vargas, and conduct yourself properly, or I shall forget that I am an old man and handle you myself!"

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"I go into your son's kitchen!" Vargas said again.

"Ask it like a man, and without a weapon in your hand—seeing that I am unarmed—and perhaps you shall receive my permission," Audre said. "You are in my house, remember, and it is not proper for you to threaten."

"I am here under peculiar circumstances, protecting my daughter," Vargas replied hotly; but he did not return his pistol to his belt, and still stood ready.

Audre waved them aside and went to the table to pick up the candle. The crisis was at hand, he knew. The open door would disclose a frightened little Erolinda Vargas crouching in some corner, and her father would be enraged.

Then Audre would have to put his arms around her and tell the true story, clear away her father's suspicions, and demand that they be allowed to wed at once. If necessary, he would oppose the wishes of his own father and take Erolinda Vargas down El Camino Real to the padre, afterward working with his two hands to make a home and living for her.

He held the candle high above his head as the others crowded forward, and with his other hand lifted the latch and threw open the door. Audre was the first to enter, and just inside the door he stepped aside to let the others pass. He heard an ejaculation from Selistino Vargas, and turned to begin his story.

But little Erolinda Vargas was not in the rear room!

THE bar was still across the door and the windows were closed and fastened tightly, but there was no Little Erolinda sitting in the corner looking with eyes of fear upon this sudden invasion. In that instant of time Audre Baldarama tried to think what had occurred, but could not guess. Here was Selistino Vargas outwitted when Audre least expected it, and Audre need not tell his story now, and perhaps his romance would come to a happy ending yet.

It was Luis Baldarama who spoke first.

"You see, Selistino Vargas!" he cried. "My son even would have spared you this last indignity, knowing your daughter was not here, but you insisted upon entering this room. And now, Selistino Vargas, we must have a settlement, you and I. And if my son wishes to stand before you with naked blade, because of the things you intimated, he has my permission to do so, and I shall be glad to watch it in the doing."

"A monstrous thing!" exclaimed Miguel Chavez, who had spoken no word for some time, half fearing that Vargas' accusations might be true.

"He was at my house, he took her away—a man saw him leaving with a bundle!" Vargas cried. "He has taken her away, and I'll not believe otherwise. What have you done with my daughter, Audre Baldarama?"

"Your daughter is not here," Audre said.

As he spoke, he was wondering what had become of Little Erolinda, half fearing she had left the cabin to walk along the crest of the hill and would return at any minute and step into the midst of the scene.

Selistino Vargas strode to the center of the room and looked about it.

"You have been absent more than a month, and did not have this house cleaned today, so the dust remains on the furniture and other things," he said. "But here is a chair where some one has been sitting recently, for the dust has been brushed from it."

"Have I said I have not visited this place since returning to the rancho?" Audre demanded.

Selistino Vargas turned and walked into the front room, and the others followed; and Audre Baldarama put the candle on the table again. Luis Baldarama had been gathering his rage for several minutes, and now it broke in a storm.

"You are no longer man of mine, Selistino Vargas!" he exclaimed, angrily. "You shall be whipped off the rancho at break of day! I'll care for your daughter, for you are not a proper person to rear her!"

Vargas dropped into a chair at one end of the table, his head in his hands, a picture of despair.

"I but sought to protect my daughter's name," he protested. "I left her tied in the closet, and when I returned it was to find her gone. There was a bundle of things gone, too, and also her mother's shawl."

"You left her tied in a closet!" Luis Baldarama cried.

"So she could not go to the rancho house and meet your son. You wished it."

"Did I tell you to treat her like a dog?"

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"She would have disobeyed me otherwise. I, too, have pride, señor. I did not care for my daughter to love your son when you desired it to be different. But I love her, perhaps, in my own way, though I am a stern man, and I would die to protect her and her good name. And I know your son was making light of her, for he told her of his love and then kissed the Chavez woman. Where would my daughter go when she left my house, if not with Audre Baldarama?"

"Perhaps far up into the hills to pray Heaven to give her a man for father, instead of a beast," Miguel Chavez growled.

"Things have gone far enough!" shouted Luis Baldarama. "I have spoken, Vargas. Leave this house! Go to your own and get what you desire—prepare to be whipped off the rancho!"

"I do not go without my daughter! Shall I leave her here at the mercy of Audre Baldarama and his kind?"

"Hah!" shrieked Luis Baldarama, and sprang toward him. "I'll take your throat between these two hands of mine and choke the life out of you! Dare you say that I am not an honorable man, and that my son is not? Have I watched over this rancho and its people for years to have a man like you make light of its standing and character now?"

"Back, Luis Baldarama! You have done much for me, but do not lay your hand upon me now!"

Vargas' pistol was out again as he backed toward the door. Luis Baldarama stood in the middle of the room, his arms folded, a look of scorn on his face.

"I leave the rancho because you have commanded it," Vargas said, "but not until I find my daughter and ascertain that she has come to no harm. And, if she has, I shall know how to handle the man responsible, and no one can prevent me, not even Luis Baldarama himself."

He extended a hand to reach the latch of the door. He missed it, and groped blindly and struck the back of a chair, meanwhile watching the three men before him. His fingers came in contact with something soft, and he glanced aside to see what it could be, and to locate the latch again.

Then he gave a cry that the men in the patio must have heard even during their merrymaking.

"MY DAUGHTER is not here, eh? But she has been! This shawl—there is none other like it near San Luis Rey de Francia. It was her mother's; it is missing from my house now. She has been here and she wore the shawl. What do you say now, Audre Baldarama?"

There could be no denial of such evidence. Audre knew it, and so did his father and Miguel Chavez. The time had come for the truth to be told.

"There is an explanation to be made," Audre began. His father's eyes were upon him now, and they held something of pain and astonishment.

"What do you say, Audre Baldarama?" Vargas demanded. "Did you have my daughter here?"

"I had her here, but——"

"Despoiler of women!" Vargas shrieked.

The pistol at his side spoke, smoke filled the room. Through it, Luis Baldarama saw his son stagger, then crash full-length to the floor. In an instant he had wrenched the weapon from Selistino Vargas' hand, and with a blow of his fist had sent Vargas reeling to the corner, half unconscious.

He sprang forward as Miguel Chavez started to kneel beside the fallen Audre. There was a gash on Audre's forehead from which the blood spurted; his body twitched and then was still.

It seemed to Luis Baldarama that his tongue refused to move in speech. He stood motionless, watching the blood flow from the wound. Slower and slower came the ruby flood; then it ceased entirely. As if in a dream he heard Miguel Chavez's voice—

"I can not feel his heart beating, my friend."

"Audre! Audre Baldarama, my son!"

"See to it that his murderer does not escape!"

Luis Baldarama threw back his shoulders and dashed the tears from his eyes. He had been a hard man in his life, a man of justice, a man of mingled sternness and pity. When there were facts to be faced, he had faced them with conviction and courage.

He looked down at his son again, and then he spoke:

"There are many things to be done quickly, Miguel Chavez, my friend. When the ruffians hear of of this there will be a lynching—for they worship Audre, those

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men. And this thing I have flung into the corner had some justification, we will say, and I am a just man."

"You would not let him go? Give him to the men!"

"Neither, my friend. We shall take him as prisoner to the rancho house and put him in the storeroom at the head of the stairs. The girl shall be found and her evidence taken. It is my son who lies there, and I would be a prejudiced judge, so the law must deal with this Vargas as it will. Though the truth comes out and stains my son's name, yet the truth must be told. We will take this man to the rancho house as prisoner, and you, Miguel Chavez, will find the physician and send him here. Let nothing be said to any one else, for we must have no mob rule this night."

"There is no need for the physician, Luis Baldarama."

"Send him, nevertheless, and tell him to maintain secrecy. We must keep this from the ruffians until Selistino Vargas can be started on his way down El Camino Real to the presidio at San Diego de Alcalá."

He crossed to Vargas as he finished speaking, grasped him by the collar of his cloak and lifted him to his feet. He looked back at his son again, then led the way out, gripping Vargas by the arm. Miguel Chavez blew out the candle, closed the door, and hurried forward to stand at the other side of the prisoner.

"Unless you would be torn to pieces by the ruffians, Selistino Vargas," Baldarama said, "you'll act in a natural manner and refrain from speaking. You shall remain at the rancho house until such time as I can make arrangements to send you to the presidio. After you have gone, the truth must be told, but the ruffians will not be able to reach you then. And unless the truth reveals that your daughter indeed was treated ill by my son, you may well wish, Selistino Vargas, that you never had been born. For even in the guard-house at the presidio, or in the presence of those who shall try you, or in the chapel of the mission itself, I'll take your life with my two bare hands!"

Vargas made no answer. He stumbled forward between them, his face white because of a full realization of the thing he had done. And so they came to the end of the patio where the musicians were playing and men and women were dancing.

"You will stop the feast?" Miguel Chavez asked.

"We must not now, for they will suspect all is not well. And stopping the feast will not bring back my son to me."

CHAPTER IX

CARLOS TELLS THE RUFFIANS

CARLOS had been disappointed in not getting the enchiladas from Audre Baldarama, amazed when he saw Audre drop the food on the floor of the big room and start to spring upon Selistino Vargas, and moved almost to tears when he saw big Miguel Chavez, springing up, put his foot squarely in the delicacy and kick it to one side, a useless mess.

Having advanced toward Audre as far as he had, Carlos overheard the conversation and realized its import. The half-wit had moments of full sanity, and such a moment came to him now, for he knew that it would be a grievous thing if Selistino Vargas went to Audre Baldarama's house on the crest of the hill and found his daughter there; and Carlos knew her to be there, for Audre had told him when explaining about the horses.

He slipped away into the crowd, nobody noting his going, or not caring if they noted it, ran off the end of the veranda and hurried from palm to palm and brush to brush like an elusive shadow. He worshiped Audre Baldarama, he loved Little Erolinda in his own way, and he disliked Selistino Vargas, her father, because of his gruff and stern manner. Carlos did not stop to analyze whether he was attempting to save Audre and Erolinda from annoyance or merely trying to outwit Selistino Vargas.

He found the house dark, of course, and crept to the front door and opened it.

"Erolinda Vargas!" he called. "Little Erolinda!"

"Here I am, Carlos," came a voice from the rear room.

The half-wit closed the front door and ran across the room in the dark, fumbling for the latch of the door on the opposite side, hearing Erolinda open it finally and step out.

"Why is there not a light?" she asked. "Are you there, Carlos?"

"Here I am, Little Erolinda; and a light would not be safe just now, I think. Audre

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Baldarama has spoken to me about getting the horses ready, that he might take you down El Camino Real to the padre and return with you his wife. He promised me enchiladas for attending to things, but I never shall have them now."

"I am sure he will give you some."

"I have seen the food, Little Erolinda, but never shall I eat it. It was in the big room of the rancho house, and Audre was carrying it to me, when your father came in. He had rage in his face, your father, and a pistol in his belt, and he bent forward and put his hands on the table before Audre and Luis Baldarama and the Chavez man, and he demanded to know what Audre had done with his daughter."

"Carlos!"

"Hah! He was angry, I tell you! He had been home, he said, and had found you gone, and a bundle of things and your shawl also, and some man of the rancho had told him he had seen Audre running from the house with a bundle. Hah! He surely was angry! He accused Audre Baldarama of making love to both you and the Chavez woman, and said his pretended love for you was a jest. There were other things mentioned of which I know nothing, being with but half a brain. And Selistino Vargas, your father, insisted that they come here to see if you were in Audre Baldarama's dwelling."

"To come here?" she gasped.

"Yes—to come here. That is why I ran ahead, little Erolinda Vargas. Miguel Chavez put his big foot on my enchiladas and ruined them, and so I have decided to help you get away and fool them all. I think it would be better, Little Erolinda, if we left here and hurried to your father's house, and then I may come back and watch and listen."

"Yes, yes—I must get away!" she said.

"If your father finds you here, he will be in a rage and may try to hurt Audre, though I doubt whether he could."

"I must get away," she repeated, realizing more than the half-wit how the matter would look to her father.

"I will take you home, Little Erolinda, and when your father does not find you here he will return to his own house, and there you will be, sitting beside the table and reading from a book. It will be a great joke, Little Erolinda! If he asks how you came to be out of the closet, you may say that I untied you, having heard you sob, and I will manage to keep out of your father's way until he forgets. If he asks where you were, you may say you took a walk along the path. Neither would that be a falsehood, for you did, Little Erolinda."

He opened the door for her and let her out, and closed the door and followed, leading her far to one side in the shadows so that they would meet no one, and in time circling through the brush and so coming to her father's house. While she waited some distance away, Carlos ran forward to investigate, and returned to say that nobody was there.

So Erolinda entered quickly and lit the candle and sat down to read, and the half-wit hurried back whence he had come.

He reached Audre Baldarama's dwelling on the crest of the hill, to see a light there and to hear harsh words. Creeping close to the wall, he huddled in the shadows trying to hear.

"Hah! But they are at it!" he breathed. "How Audre Baldarama does stand up to that gruff Selistino Vargas! And how Luis Baldarama does rave and Miguel Chavez growl deep down in his throat! Here be three foolish fathers, I think. It does not pay to be a father—it is much trouble. I think I shall never be a father, but, if I am, never will I have children to bother me so!"

He heard them go into the rear room, and crept along the wall to listen.

"Hah!" he whispered to the night. "So old Luis Baldarama would whip Selistino Vargas off the rancho, eh? I surely must see that! And he would take Little Erolinda to live in the rancho house? Then would I have enchiladas each day!"

And now he listened breathlessly, for the men inside were back in the front room again. He heard Luis Baldarama's hoarse voice in denunciation, then Vargas's angry reply, then a shot.

CARLOS trembled in the darkness next to the wall and wished he had not mixed in this business. For a moment it was quiet inside, and then he heard Miguel Chavez's voice, then old Luis Baldarama cry:

"Audre! Audre Baldarama, my son!"

Seconds seemed hours to Carlos after that, until Chavez and Baldarama walked away with Selistino Vargas between them.

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He remained beside the wall until they were almost to the patio, and then he sped around the end of the house and opened the door, lifting the latch softly as if afraid of disturbing who was within.

He closed the door and hurried to light the candle, and ran forward to peer at the form on the floor. There was big Audre Baldarama flat on his back, and the blood was congealing about a wound on his temple.

The flame of the candle flared, and Carlos shielded it with one hand and looked again. This was Big Audre Baldarama, who always had been kind to him, who had protected him from the rough play of other men. Here was Audre, his friend, shot down by a man he did not like. Two tears trickled down Carlos' cheeks as he arose and stumbled toward the door. He threw it open and went out into the night again.

For a moment he stood on the crest of the hill, thinking, looking down at the rancho house. Less than two weeks before he had seen Audre Baldarama defeat an Indian chief in hand-to-hand combat while the ruffians looked on and howled their joy. Ah, how the ruffians loved Audre Baldarama! And now Audre would lead them no more against hostiles, because Selistino Vargas' bullet had struck him.

Carlos forgot little Erolinda Vargas, and the cause of the disturbance, forgot the Isabella Chavez woman, forgot all else except that Audre Baldarama was on the floor of his dwelling with a bullet wound in his head, and never would lead his ruffians again. When the ruffians knew—ah, when the ruffians knew!

He looked down the slope and saw a shadowy form hurrying from the rancho house. That was the physician, he guessed. He had heard Miguel Chavez say the rancho doctor could do no good, but that it was his duty to come. Nobody could help Audre Baldarama now, it seemed.

The half-wit sobbed as he slipped into the brush and made his way toward the rancho house, avoiding the doctor. Early in life he had learned to avoid men, for he had discovered that most men tormented him. Audre Baldarama never had done that.

He came to the end of the patio and looked across at the big fire. Men were wrestling and running and jumping, drinking and laughing, and there was more food on the tables. Inside the rancho house the musicians were keeping up their music, and the couples were dancing. And back at the crest of the hill Audre Baldarama was on the floor in his dwelling, the breath gone from his great body.

Decision came to the half-wit then. The taking off of his only man friend should be avenged. The ruffians should know! How they would tear Selistino Vargas limb from limb when they knew! How they would beat him, and torture him, and finally run their blades through his body!

He ran down toward the fire, but he did not shout. He waited until he reached the nearest group of men, then gave a screech that caused all eyes to turn his way. For an instant the ruffians were quiet. Light from the fire played over the features of the half-wit, and none there ever had seen him look so before.

"Hah!" he cried. "Hah, ruffians! Audre Baldarama is slain! Audre Baldarama is shot down in his own house on the crest of the hill! He lies on the floor—Audre Baldarama, your leader!"

Silence for an instant, then such a roar of rage as the rancho never had heard before. Like breakers on a rocky shore the men surged forward, a full hundred of them, the ruffians first, and others came running from the patio.

Again Carlos gave his shriek, then turned and ran with all his speed toward the house on the crest of the hill. Behind him pounded the heavy boots of the startled, determined, blood-crazed men.

CHAPTER X

"GIVE US SELISTINO VARGAS!"

THE RANCHO doctor had reached the house. He gave one glance at the body of Audre Baldarama and then began opening his instrument case, for Miguel Chavez had told him that Audre was dead, and that he was merely to inspect the wound and cleanse the face as well as he could, and attend to the body until Luis Baldarama returned.

There reached the doctor's ears the pounding of running feet and the hoarse cries of stricken men, not unlike the howling of wolves on the trail of a kill.

The doctor guessed that some one had spread the news, and he knew from experience how the ruffians would take it. The

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ruffians were peculiar in many ways, a sort of band of free-lance warriors under the leadership of Audre Baldarama, the most of them gentlemanly caballeros who rejoiced in the term applied to them instead of drawing blade about it, and who fought when there was a chance for the pure love of adventure.

Audre Baldarama was like a god to them, and their admiration of him had increased gradually and reached its zenith on this last expedition to Santa Barbara. He was their leader because of merit, and not because he was his father's son.

The doctor was used to scenes of violence on rancho and about mission, in the hills and on the highway, and he knew how strong men under stress of emotion turn into beasts for a time, not knowing restraint, not caring what they do until wild justice is accomplished.

But here was Big Audre Baldarama's body on the floor, and the presence of death was upon his house, and the doctor did not wish rough men to crowd into the room where the tragedy had been enacted. So he left the table and started across the room toward the front door, intending to open it and confront the ruffians, and urge them to go away and make no present scene.

Before he could reach it the pounding feet ceased, and the door was thrown open wide, Carlos, the half-wit, standing framed in it, and behind him a crowd of men. The doctor saw a ring of red, bearded faces, wide staring eyes, saw depicted in that one flash as the door was opened every naked emotion humans can show, save tender love. Rage and hatred, blood lust, respect for the dead, memory for the one who had been a living force among them so short a time before—all were there in the faces of the ruffians for the physician to read.

Silence for an instant, then, as the doctor would have spoken, a roar of surprise and rage, and a surging of the human wave forward as Carlos was pushed half inside the room. Carlos had not told them the manner of Audre Baldarama's shooting—they saw the body of their leader and the doctor, nothing more.

The physician waved a hand, but they did not stop. So he braced himself against the table and lifted both hands against them.

"Respect the dead!" he cried. "Back! Back, ruffians! Respect your dead!"

They stopped for an instant, for the rancho doctor was a man to be looked up to in a manner; but still they did not understand, and one of them stepped forward to seek knowledge.

"That is Big Audre Baldarama, our leader, there upon the floor?" he cried. "There is a bullet in his head, eh? And who put it there? Doctor or no doctor——"

"Do you think I did it?" the physician demanded angrily.

Carlos remembered, then, that they did not know, and rectified the matter.

"I heard it!" he screeched. "Hah, ruffians! I was outside, beside the wall, and I heard it all!"

"Tell! Tell!" they demanded, surging around him.

"Luis Baldarama was here, and Miguel Chavez, and Selistino Vargas, the superintendent of the rancho. And they quarreled with Audre—that is, Selistino Vargas did. He said that Audre had wronged his daughter, Little Erolinda, and Audre said that it was a black lie. And then this Selistino Vargas shot——"

"Selistino Vargas?" they roared.

"*Si, señores!* Selistino Vargas!" Carlos said.

"Horses! Mounts! To the highway and the hills!" one cried; and they started to rush away.

"Not the highway!" Carlos shrieked at them. "They took him to the rancho house. I heard it all, ruffians. Miguel Chavez and Luis Baldarama took Selistino Vargas to the rancho house, there to hide him until he can be taken down the highway to the presidio at San Diego de Alcalá. He is in the rancho house, while Big Audre, my friend, lies here——"

"Ruffians!" the doctor cried, cursing under his breath because the half-wit was feeding the passions of the men. "Remember, Luis Baldarama is the father of Audre, who lies here. Do as Luis Baldarama would have you in this matter, señores. Let the grieving father have his way!"

"Hah!" their spokesman cried. "Let the murderer escape, eh? Let him be taken to the presidio, where not half the wrongs are righted? You, doctor, have no hand in this business. Luis Baldarama is a big man, *sí!* But we have followed Audre Baldarama down the highway and over the

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hills, señor. We have eaten and slept and fought with him.

"Did ever he hang back when there was hard work or fighting to be done? Selistino Vargas, eh? The dog of a superintendent has shot our Audre Baldarama, and they protect him in the rancho house?"

Loud laughter came from the man's throat, but it was laughter not good to hear. He whirled around and raised hands, and as one man the ruffians turned to rush before him back down the slope and toward the rancho house, their hoarse cries ringing through the night.

WORSE than the cries of a wolf pack were those of this angry mob. Now the tumult penetrated to the rancho house, and the musicians ceased their playing, and men ran to the doors and windows to see what had happened, for they recognized the tone of the cries; and women grew white of face and grouped together in the center of the big room.

Before the wide steps of the veranda the ruffians stopped, and their cries ceased, too, for now that they had arrived at their destination they waited for one of their number to assume leadership in this business, after the manner of all mobs.

The moment was ominous. The great fire was still burning brightly, and its light showed the determined faces of the men, and the faces of those at the windows and those standing just inside the door. Outside they waited, and inside they waited, for here was a situation unexplained to those inside the rancho house, and Luis Baldarama was the man to deal with it.

He crossed the big room slowly after descending the wide half-flight of stairs, and it was noticed that Miguel Chavez remained standing at the bottom of the flight, and that both Chavez and Luis Baldarama had put pistols in their belts, a thing almost unbelievable on a night of feasting.

Those standing in the doorway fell aside and let Luis Baldarama walk out on the veranda, where he stood looking down at the men before him, scanning their upturned faces in that instant of time to read them and judge how to deal with the situation.

"What are these angry cries I hear?" he demanded in a stern voice that carried far. "This is a night of feasting, ruffians; and would you mar it? Have you taken leave of your senses?"

But he knew as he spoke that there was no weight to his words, and he said them only to gain time, thinking the ire of the mob would die out, and they would listen to reason.

But the mob had a spokesman now, a burly fellow of uncertain age who long had lived and worked at Baldarama rancho, and he stepped forward before the others and looked up at old Luis.

"We do not pretend to understand all of this business, but we know enough to act upon, señor," he said. "Audre Baldarama, your son and our leader, lies dead in his house on the crest of the hill. He was shot, Luis Baldarama, foully murdered by Selistino Vargas, your rancho superintendent. We understand that this same Vargas has been brought here, to be guarded until he can be sent down El Camino Real to the presidio at San Diego de Alcalá. And we have come to say to you that the man who shot Audre Baldarama never shall go down the highway alive, to be freed by tricks of the law. We want Selistino Vargas!"

"Hah! We want Selistino Vargas!" the ruffians cried, and in their rage drew nearer the steps.

"I am father of him who was Audre Baldarama, and it is for me to handle this business in my own way," Luis Baldarama said. "Who has the better right?"

There was consternation inside the rancho house now, for Baldarama's words confirmed what the ruffian had spoken, and it was the first those inside had known of it. Audre Baldarama shot by Selistino Vargas! Audre Baldarama, the leader of the ruffians! And Luis Baldarama trying to shield the murderer?

"We can understand, Luis Baldarama," the spokesman continued, "that you are and always have been a man of justice, and perhaps it is in your mind to let the law deal with the murderer of your son. But we of the highway have our own law, señor; and we have followed him who was your son, and fought by his side, and learned to love him for the man he was. So give us this Selistino Vargas, and turn your back. It is all we ask."

"You do not know the circumstances—" Luis Baldarama began.

"But we knew Audre Baldarama for a strong man with a tender heart. We know he could have done nothing that merited death at the hands of Selistino Vargas,

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or at the hands of any other man, save in fair fight. Unarmed he was when shot, for there was no pistol in his belt, nor in his house when we looked a few minutes ago. Foully murdered he was, and we know how to deal with the man who committed the crime. Give us Selistino Vargas!

"There are matters to be investigated first. I am a just man, I hope, señores. You know nothing of the circumstances."

"Nor do we care, Luis Baldarama. We know that your son and our leader is dead, and we want the man who slew him. We do not want to go against your wishes in this matter, but if you stand between us and Selistino Vargas, then, Luis Baldarama, we shall forget your name and station, and take matters into our own hands!"

A chorus of shrieks answered him, and once more the men surged closer. Inside the big room the women were huddling in a corner now, looking at one another through startled eyes, guessing at the reason for the tragedy and fearing what was to come. Luis Baldarama raised a hand as the ruffians thronged up the steps, and for a moment he stopped them.

"I was his father and my heart is grieved," he said. "But I must see justice done. I have said that there are matters to be investigated. Until that has been done, Selistino Vargas must not be handled by any man. Remember that I am master here. Go your ways! You can not have Selistino Vargas!"

He stepped back into the doorway as he spoke, drawing his pistol from his belt, and stood facing them, waiting, trying to cow them with his black look, as often he had cowed men before. But these ruffians were different men now. They had seen the still form of Audre Baldarama on the floor of his house, and they remembered his many good qualities and the splendor of his leadership.

They rushed. Luis Baldarama fired, and one man went down with a bullet in his leg. But no single shot could stop them, for they were used to fighting, with pistols and blades and poniards and bare fists. They surged forward again, tearing at one another to get at the door as it was slammed in their faces.

Inside the big room there was confusion now. Quickly the women were hurried into another apartment, and some of the men with them. Two or three overseers, called by Luis Baldarama, armed themselves and stood beside him at the foot of the stairs. Half way up the flight was old Miguel Chavez, young again because of the tumult, holding his weapon ready.

Strong men crashed against the door, but Luis Baldarama had barred it, and the bars held. Bearded faces peered in at the windows, and presently one pane was broken; but the men did not try to enter that way, for they could do so only one at a time, and would be unable to make a rush.

Again there came a crash against the door, and it rocked on its great hinges; another, and the bars flew from their places, and there sprawled into the big room the leaders of the mob, and behind them surged the others, a hundred men in all, and they spread out fan-fashion across the room and before the foot of the stairs.

CHAPTER XI

IN TIME

ISABELLA CHAVEZ, talking with some of the women of the rancho, had seen her father and Luis Baldarama leave the house with Audre and Vargas, and she had feared that plans had gone awry, for she had one look at Vargas's face. While they were gone she managed to keep up conversation, meanwhile watching the door. And when the three returned without Audre, and Selistino Vargas, white of face and trembling, walking between the other two, she had felt sudden fear.

They had stopped at the table, where Selistino Vargas had swallowed a gulp of wine, there was a short talk, and then the three had gone up the wide stairs and opened the door of the little storeroom at the top and disappeared within.

She had heard the screeches of Carlos, but could not catch the words. She knew the ruffians had left their fire and had rushed up the hill, and was anxious for news of what had occurred, but could do naught except remain talking to the women.

Then Luis Baldarama and her father came down the stairs alone, and the ruffians set up their clamor outside, and Luis Baldarama rushed to the door to meet them just as the cries of the mob told Isabella Chavez what had happened.

She knew her face had gone white, and she left the women and walked across to the foot of the stairs, where her father stood.

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"What is it?" she asked. "Tell me what has happened."

Miguel Chavez saw her white face and believed, of course, that his daughter and Audre Baldarama had looked upon each other with favor this night, and feared at first to tell the truth. But she insisted, and so he stood close to her, watching the door, and spoke in a low tone.

"A monstrous business," he said. "This Selistino Vargas, it seems, thought Audre Baldarama an unworthy man playing with Little Erolinda. We went to his dwelling to search, but the girl was not there—and then Vargas found a shawl she had been wearing and had left behind. He shot, and Audre Baldarama fell. Remember your blood, my daughter, and hold up your head! It is yet to be proved that Audre was the man Vargas intimated, but the evidence against him looks bad."

"But it is not bad!" she began; and Miguel Chavez, thinking the girl naturally rushing to the defense of the man she was supposed to wed, held up his hand for silence, and from habit she obeyed.

She would have said more, would have told the truth, but just then the mob rushed forward and Luis Baldarama closed the door and Chavez told Isabella to go into the adjoining room with the other women.

There Isabella huddled in a corner for a time, the others giving her scant attention. So the romance had ended in tragedy, and it had been of her planning! Audre Baldarama was dead, and little Erolinda Vargas would be no bride now. She wondered what had become of Erolinda, whether she had heard the truth, whether her heart was bleeding as Isabella knew it must be.

It was an hour when a woman needed another woman for comfort, she knew. If she could but find Little Erolinda!

She slipped out through a rear door and started walking around the end of the house, and at the corner she met the half-wit, who was doing nothing in particular, now that he had urged on the mob, except weeping because of the fate of his friend.

"Carlos!" she called softly; and he slipped to her side.

"What is it, Chavez woman?"

"It—it is true?"

"It is true. I heard it."

"Tell me, Carlos."

In a few words he told her, for his grief partially stopped his usually long tongue, and Isabella Chavez reeled against the side of the rancho house, holding her hands to her face.

"Then it is true?" the half-wit asked, observing her manner. "You did love Audre Baldarama, señorita? It is true what they said? That Audre but played with little Erolinda Vargas?"

"No, no!" she cried. "I did not love him, Carlos."

"You let him kiss you."

"It was a kiss of friendship, because we had agreed on certain things. But I admired him, Carlos, and wanted him to be happy with Little Erolinda. I am thinking of her now, Carlos. Do you suppose she is still at her father's house, where you left her? Do you suppose she knows?"

"We will go and see," he replied simply.

"Yes; we'll go to Little Erolinda, Carlos."

They hurried along the path behind the row of huts, half running a part of the way, stumbling through the brush at times. Behind them rang the shouts of the mob as they battered at the doors of the rancho house.

Little Erolinda Vargas had heard the tumult, for the front door of her father's house was open, and she was standing in it, listening. She clutched at her breast when she saw Isabella Chavez and Carlos hurrying toward her along the path, for it flashed upon her that it was bad news they carried.

They stopped a few feet from her, and Isabella Chavez, without speaking, held out her arms and stepped forward, and little Erolinda Vargas, without knowing the reason, but feeling that it was something that mattered considerably to herself, crept inside those arms and began to weep.

They went into the house, and the half-wit closed the door and stood before it, holding his cap in his hands.

"You must be brave, Little Erolinda," Isabella was saying.

"You have not told me why," she replied. "It—it is Audre?"

"Yes."

"What has happened?"

It was a difficult task Isabella faced now, but she accomplished it bravely. She told the story in a few words, trying to smooth the tragedy and knowing she could not, and Little Erolinda, weeping no longer, remained in the other woman's arms and stared dry-eyed at the corner of the room, seeing nothing.

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"AUDRE! Audre!" she whispered. "And my father did it, thinking such things of me? Is there to be no happiness in all the world? Was it wrong for us to love? Had we not the right? If only we had taken hold of hands and stood out before them all, and told!"

"Poor little Erolinda!" Isabella sobbed.

"It can not be helped now—it is over. Carlos, the half-wit, nor my father, nor any other person will tell me again there is laughter in my eyes. I think it would kill me if ever again I tried to sing. And my father thought that—of Audre! They must all know the truth, Isabella Chavez! They must know the truth! I shall tell them, every word, so they will not believe that Audre was an unworthy man."

"I'll help you," Isabella said. "I'll tell the truth, too, and explain how you came to be in Audre's house, and why. All must know that your father made a grave mistake."

Carlos opened the door to look out, and the roar of the mob came to their ears again. Little Erolinda Vargas got up and started toward the door, staggering a bit because of the weight of sorrow she carried in her heart.

"We will go now," she whispered.

Isabella put her arms around the girl, and they left the house and started down the path, Carlos walking a few feet behind them, still holding his cap in his hands. As they neared the patio they could hear the shrieks of the ruffians and the battering at the door of the rancho house.

"What are the ruffians trying to do?" Little Erolinda asked.

"They are demanding they have Selistino Vargas," Carlos said, before Isabella could stop him. "They would punish him for slaying Audre Baldarama."

"Punish him!" Erolinda exclaimed; and then the truth came to her. "They would kill him, you mean—kill my father! Those are the ruffians Audre led against the hostiles in the north, and they will torture and kill my father. And he did not understand! He was thinking of me and my good name. He is a cruel, stern man, but he is my father. Must I lose husband-to-be and father, too?"

She started on again, walking swifter, and still the tears did not come. Isabella Chavez, knowing something of women, wished that Little Erolinda would sob the sorrow out of her heart, wished that she might collapse beneath the burden of pain, be insensible to what was happening until it had been done.

She still held an arm around Little Erolinda as they reached the end of the patio and started across it to the door. The door crashed in just then, and the ruffians entered the rancho house, shrieking their blood cries.

Little Erolinda began running now, with Isabella beside her and the half-wit just behind. She reached the veranda and stopped there for a moment with one hand held across her eyes, for she felt suddenly weak and dizzy. Then she straightened up and ran on.

THE ruffians were fan-fashion before the foot of the stairs when Little Erolinda entered the big room. She dodged between two of them, and in an instant was standing beside Luis Baldarama and facing the men.

Their cries died out at sight of her, and some of them removed their sombreros as Little Erolinda, clutching at her throat, tried to find voice to speak. They all knew little Erolinda Vargas. On the journey to Santa Barbara, and returning, Audre Baldarama had talked continually of her, and the ruffians suspected how matters had been between them. And they sensed the tragedy now—Little Erolinda's husband-to-be slain by her father.

Luis Baldarama put out his hand and would have passed her to the other side of the stairs, and so on to the room where the women were huddled, but she stopped him. The half-wit had slipped close to her side, and Isabella Chavez was near a window and not far away.

"What would you do?" The words were scarcely more than whispers, but the ruffians heard. There was no answer, and Erolinda struggled for strength to continue. Those nearest her would not meet her eyes.

"You must know the truth," she said, speaking slowly. "Audre Baldarama was to have been my husband. Dear Heaven, how we loved each other! But his father and mine wished for him to wed—some other woman—and so they tried to part us. And we had arranged to run away this night, and go to San Juan Capistrano, there to be married by a padre. We were afraid our fathers would not let us go if they knew. So Audre took me to his house

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and left me there, coming back to the rancho house for things he needed. He was to return as soon as he could slip away, and Carlos, the half-wit, was to get the horses ready."

She choked, and for an instant Isabella Chavez thought the sobs were coming now, and moved toward her. But little Erolinda Vargas threw back her head and looked at them again, and continued:

"My father learned that I was not at our house, and thought ill of Audre and of me. He came here and demanded that Audre's dwelling be searched, thinking to find me there. You can understand what he felt, can you not, some of you who are fathers? Carlos warned me, and I ran back home. And in the dwelling of Audre Baldarama my father found a shawl I had dropped in my haste. It came upon him then, I suppose, that his name had been dishonored, for he could not understand, not realizing that I must be wedded to Audre Baldarama or die because I loved him so. And so he shot——"

The ruffians were murmuring now, and there was anger in the tone of the voices.

"So you see, it was a mistake," Little Erolinda went on. "My husband-to-be lies dead, and never will I laugh again. But neither will it bring the laughter back to my lips if you slay my father, as I know now you would do. It was but a mistake, and I suffer more than any of you because of it."

Little Erolinda Vargas believed she was making the right appeal, but she could not have said worse words in her father's behalf. These men of Baldarama knew and loved Little Erolinda, and they knew, too, how cruelly her father had treated her at times. And they rebelled to think he had tried to prevent her marriage to Audre Baldarama, the man they worshiped.

But most of all, they hated Selistino Vargas now, because, as Little Erolinda had said, he could think that Audre Baldarama of the tender heart would treat a woman ill. Their rage had been increased by her words, and they looked at one another and wondered how they were to get her away. They could deal with Luis Baldarama and Miguel Chavez and the others, but these ruffians of the highway could not fight a woman.

"So Selistino Vargas stained the name of Audre Baldarama, and then killed him!" some man at the back of the throng cried. "Better for Little Erolinda to have no father than such a one! Get Selistino Vargas!"

"Get Selistino Vargas!" the others cried; and, crowded by those behind, those in front rushed at the foot of the stairs, brushing little Erolinda Vargas from their path; and when the first had his feet on the lowest step, Luis Baldarama fired over their heads.

"Back!" he cried. "The next time I shoot to kill! You can not have him!"

Miguel Chavez raised his weapon also, and the other two men, both overseers of the rancho, who stood out against the mob. But the ruffians were not to be denied their vengeance now. They knew Selistino Vargas was in that room at the head of the stairs, a storehouse the most of them had entered at some time, and that there was but the one door, and no window. Between them and their intended victim stood only Luis Baldarama and three other men.

Some would be injured, of course—that was to be expected. Some one generally was injured when a mob fought. What mattered it, if they attained their object?

They hesitated but an instant, and then they rushed again. Luis Baldarama fired, but no man was hit, and the bullet buried itself in the opposite wall, and before he could fire again a ruffian, who had mounted over the side of the stairs, tore the weapon from Baldarama's hand and hurled it across the room.

"Back! Back!" Miguel Chavez and the others were crying.

Again the ruffians hesitated, gathering breath and courage for the final rush, the most of them with blades drawn and held ready in case Selistino Vargas should attempt a dash to freedom. And in that instant little Erolinda Vargas slipped through them and ran half way up the flight of stairs, and turned and faced them again.

"Would you slay my father before my eyes?" she cried.

"This is no place for you, señorita," the spokesman said. "What must be done, must be done!"

"Did I not love Audre Baldarama, too? Did not his father love him? Yet we do not seek the life of the man who took Audre Baldarama's. It is natural for me, perhaps, because the man you seek is my father. But Luis Baldarama has asked you to spare the man who slew his son, that you let the law——"

"The law!" they screeched in chorus and in scorn.

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"Stand aside, señorita!" one cried. "Nothing can stop us now!"

They rushed. The men on the stairs fired. Two of the ruffians fell to groan in pain. Little Erolinda Vargas felt herself crushed against the railing, and cowered beside it, trying to shield her eyes with her hands. It soon would be over now.

Then there came a scream from Carlos, the half-wit, in the center of the big room, and men stopped in their tracks because of the uncanniness of it. Instinctively they turned. And what they saw caused many to cross themselves, and others to brush hands across their eyes. A bit of silence—then a roar that shook the rafters of the rancho house and rattled its windows.

From the door and across the room came the rancho doctor. And tottering beside him, very weak, and his face white, and a bandage around his head, was Audre Baldarama!

CHAPTER XII

IN THE DOORWAY!

AGAIN the roar from hoarse throats, but this time half of welcome, half of wonder.

The ruffians crowded forward, but the doctor waved them aside, and they obeyed, looking at the white face and drawn features of the man they had followed. And so, when little Erolinda Vargas raised her head she looked straight down at him; and Audre Baldarama, weak though he was, held out his arms, and his white face was illuminated with a rare smile.

For an instant Erolinda stood still and looked down at him, scarcely believing, then she gave a cry of joy, and before them all rushed down the steps and let him clasp her to his breast. And then the sobs and tears that Isabella Chavez had been wishing for, came—but they were sobs and tears of joy.

Again the men cheered. And now old Luis Baldarama was stumbling down the stairs, and Miguel Chavez after him, and on the face of old Luis was a look the men never had seen there before. It welcomed his son back from the dead, and, because of the story Little Erolinda had told, it welcomed a son who had done no wrong, and it was a glorified look because of that.

"Audre! Audre Baldarama, my son!" he breathed, even as he had in the house at the crest of the hill.

The doctor did not like emotional scenes, and to bring this one to an end he mounted the lowest step, as Luis Baldarama clasped his son and Erolinda, and turned to face the ruffians.

"You wonder, perhaps?" the doctor said. "No ordinary bullet, it seems, can pierce the skull of Big Audre Baldarama and send his soul to eternity. The shot struck his temple a glancing blow, enough to have slain an ordinary man, and felled him. And in falling his head struck against the edge of the table, giving him another cruel blow. Was it a wonder he remained on the floor as if dead, that his breast did not heave, and that he gave every indication of being a dead man?

"I doubt not, his heart stopped for an instant, else pounded so slowly that it could not be felt. And Señor Chavez was in haste because of the tragedy, and Luis Baldarama, my friend, was so charged with grief that he took the word of Chavez for it. You men, intent upon vengeance, did not stop to examine. But when I knelt beside him I found a flicker of life in his great body, and nursed it as a man nurses a dying fire, and brought it back to a flame."

"Hah! The great doctor!" cried the half-wit from his position near the foot of the stairs.

"The great, great doctor!" screeched the ruffians; and they would have lifted him to their shoulders had he not, laughing, run half-way up the wide steps.

They turned toward Audre again, for Little Erolinda and Luis Baldarama were helping him forward.

"They would have slain my father," Little Erolinda was saying. "Now, perhaps, they are glad they did not."

"Not now will we slay him!" cried one from the midst of the crowd. "But he shall be whipped from the rancho, to crawl down El Camino Real like a wounded dog——"

Shrieks approved of the sentiment. The ruffians had their leader back again, but the man who had caused him pain should be punished, should suffer anguish himself. In a flash Audre himself felt the temper of the crowd, and hurried to the foot of the stairs and turned to face them.

"It is best to forgive," he said. "I think that now my father will let me wed little

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Erolinda Vargas, as I wish, and that her own father will have no objection."

"But we must whip Selistino Vargas!"

"Whip my bride's father?" Audre cried.

They pushed the spokesman forward.

"Audre Baldarama, you are known to be big and strong of body, but tender of heart," the spokesman said. "Always you would save the wounded dog, señor, and you never put to death an injured foe. In this it is your mind to act as in other things, and it is proper, since you are to wed Selistino Vargas' daughter.

"But we ruffians may handle the man for ourselves for what he did to you, our leader, and for the cruelty he has practised on his own flesh and blood. Also, he would have stained your name, and it is almost a legend that things of that sort can not occur on the rancho of Luis Baldarama. Moreover, Big Audre, Selistino Vargas has been a cruel taskmaster in the fields, because that is his way. We have no need of him here. We shall whip him from the rancho and let him crawl to some pueblo and there get work and live his life. There is no place at Baldarama longer for Selistino Vargas!"

He stopped; and the cries of the others told that he had expressed their sentiments. Audre's brain was clearing rapidly, and he was thinking of this thing. Perhaps Selistino Vargas deserved it, but it would be a terrible thing to do. From one end of El Camino Real to the other it would be known that Selistino Vargas had been whipped off a rancho by his own men and his neighbors, and the finger of derision would be pointed at him, and his name would be held in memory as an object of scorn. Mothers would threaten unruly children with what had happened to Selistino Vargas. Even the frailes at the missions would speak to him without warmth in their voices.

He knew the tender heart of Little Erolinda, and how it would bleed if this infamy were put upon her father, though he never had treated her with much love. He wanted the laughter in Little Erolinda's eye and on her red lips, and the song in her heart, and he knew that this thing would kill them forever if it came to pass, for she was a sensitive girl. Selistino Vargas would have to leave the rancho, that much was certain, for no man would work under him or with him now. But he should be allowed to go in his own way, and without being whipped.

"Ruffians!" Audre Baldarama cried. "You wish to cast this shame upon the father of the woman I am soon to call wife? You would shame me, too?"

"Not so, señor!" the spokesman said. "We shame no one except Selistino Vargas, neither you nor your bride, Audre Baldarama; and if any man says aught against either of you, he must have a settlement with us. But for his cruelty, Selistino Vargas shall be whipped from the camp like the cur he is!"

While the spokesman was speaking, Audre Baldarama had beckoned Carlos, the half-wit, near to him, and bent to whisper so that none but his father and Carlos and Little Erolinda could hear his words.

"Listen, Carlos, if you love me and am glad that I have returned from the dead! Listen—and be quick in action—and you shall have enchiladas every day."

"I am listening, Audre Baldarama."

"Slip away and run to the kitchen of the rancho house. From it there is a chute that goes to the storeroom where Selistino Vargas is hiding now. There is a door just to the left of the fireplace——"

"I know the chute, Audre Baldarama; they use it to let down casks and bales from the storeroom to the kitchen."

"It is the only way out of the storeroom, except the door at the top of these steps. In the chute is a ladder, Carlos. Climb it, and you will come to a small trap-door in the floor. It is locked at the bottom. You must unlock it, Carlos, and let Selistino Vargas out and through the chute to the kitchen, so he can hasten to the corral and get a horse, and ride down El Camino Real to safety. Hurry, Carlos, my friend!"

He finished his whispering as the spokesman concluded his speech, but some of the ruffians had noticed what Audre had been doing. None of them knew of the chute, but they suspected that Audre had found a way to release Selistino Vargas, and was sending Carlos to do it, since neither he nor his father could leave without being watched. And so, as Carlos tried to slip around the edge of the throng and hurry to the kitchen, three men caught at him and clapped their hands over his mouth to stop his squeals, and held him there behind the crowd.

"Audre of the tender heart may walk

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aside with his bride," the spokesman went on. "We take Selistino Vargas, and we whip him, and none may stop us. We have decided on this course, and there is an end of the matter."

THEY started forward, and Audre held up a hand to order them back. But they laughed for very admiration of him as they rushed, and some of them tenderly held him to one side, for he was still too weak to fight. Again Luis Baldarama shot over their heads, sensing what Audre was feeling; and again they hesitated for an instant.

Luis Baldarama lifted little Erolinda Vargas over the side of the stairs so she would not be injured in the crush, and the ruffians passed her along until she was in the rear of the throng. That was what Luis Baldarama wished, they thought—to get little Erolinda Vargas away from the scene.

And Little Erolinda ran to the edge of the crowd and turned to watch, fearing for the shame her father might endure, and wondering whether Carlos would be in time. Then she saw that Carlos was held prisoner, and knew the ruffians had guessed and that Audre's ruse had failed.

The ruffians surged forward again to the bottom of the steps, and now their leaders had their feet upon the lowest of the flight, half knowing that Luis Baldarama would not shoot to kill, now that he understood they intended only to whip Selistino Vargas, and not slay him. They had seen the changes in Baldarama's face, too, and realized he had not so much sympathy for Vargas now, since Audre had been proved a man not unworthy.

"Ruffians! Never call me leader again if you do this thing!" Audre cried.

"Our leader always!" one answered. "But Selistino Vargas shall be whipped! It will do him good, Big Audre Baldarama; it will teach him to be less cruel, and to refrain from staining names with his evil tongue."

Audre sprang away from them and dashed up the steps. He took the pistol from the hand of Miguel Chavez, and he faced the ruffians again.

"I mean it, señores!" he cried. "If I fire upon you, it will be to kill, and I shall shoot as surely as you advance toward me beyond the third step."

This was a serious matter, the ruffians knew, but they were not to be robbed of their vengeance. Nor did they want to hurt Audre Baldarama, nor have him injure one of them, since things could never be quite the same afterward if he did.

They saw him reel because of his weakness and the excitement, and took advantage of it. They were laughing men who took the weapon from his hand and carried him down the stairs to the bottom, for they bore him no ill will because of his opposition, understanding his feelings in the matter.

The next rush made prisoners of Luis Baldarama and Chavez and the two overseers, for they did not fight with much spirit. And the mob was in command of the stairs!

They stopped. The tumult ceased. The spokesman stood out in front, with Audre Baldarama's pistol in his hand. Behind him, on the steps, and to either side, were the ruffians, some with pistols clutched and ready, others with naked blades.

"Come out, Selistino Vargas!" the spokesman commanded. "Come out without weapon in your hand, and face us! We have decided you are not worthy to remain on this rancho. A short time ago we would have slain you; but now we shall tear off your cloak and shirt, and whip you publicly, and send you down El Camino Real to be scorned by men and shamed by squaws. Open the door and come down, for there is no escape, and the sooner this thing is done the better. You of evil tongue, you of stern cruelty toward men and women, man-beast that you are, would-be slayer of a better man—come out now and face us! Shall we term you coward, too?"

It was the supreme insult. There was quiet for a moment, and then the door opened half an inch, and the men saw, and the spokesman held his pistol ready, thinking Selistino Vargas might try to fight his way through and get free. Another inch the door was opened—and then it flew back.

A chorus of gasps from those on the stairs.

A chuckle from Carlos, the half-wit, half-choked back into his throat by the men who held him!

A cry from Audre Baldarama!

In the open doorway stood little Erolinda Vargas.

"Such hard names as you call me, señores!" she cried; and lo! the laughter was in her eyes once more.

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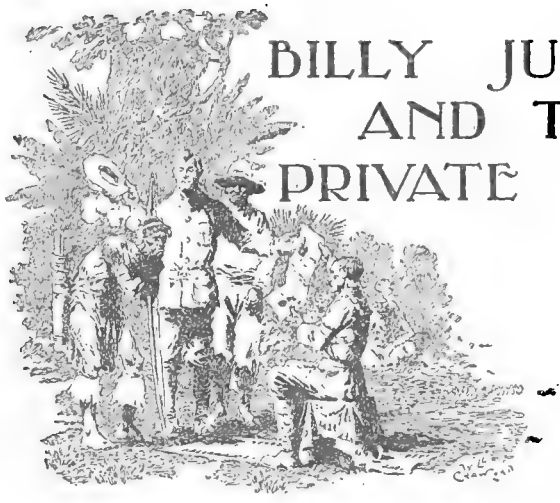
YOU have guessed, of course, that Little Erolinda, not noticed by the men, merely slipped out into the kitchen, and did what they had prevented Carlos doing.

You may guess, also, how Selistino Vargas made his escape from the rancho house, and got a horse at the corral, and rode like the wind up El Camino Real to the pueblo of Reina de Los Angeles, where he obtained employment and lived his life.

You may guess how Audre and Little Erolinda were wed by a good padre of San Luis Rey de Francia, while a throng of grinning neophytes looked on in wonder, and how they continued to live at the Baldarama rancho, where Audre assumed management of the great business; and how they journeyed to Reina de Los Angeles to see Selistino Vargas at times.

You may even know how, that very morning at sunrise, a cavalcade left the rancho and went the few miles to the mission—a cavalcade in which were Audre and Little Erolinda, and Audre's fifty fighting-men, and old Luis Baldarama, and even Miguel Chavez and his fair daughter, Isabella—to greet the padre and have him say the words.

But those things, of course, are really none of our business. For Audre and Little Erolinda rode side by side ahead, holding hands as their horses trotted shoulder to shoulder, reading love in each other's eyes and dreaming of the future. And it seemed that Big Audre's shoulders were broader and that he carried his head higher—for El Camino Real is the King's Highway, and he who has won the love of a good woman is a king.



BILLY JUNE AND THE PRIVATE DOCUMENT

by Wilbur Hall

WE SAID to Billy June—

"Isn't there gold there—tons of it, only waiting to be shoveled up and washed and shipped to Para or Rio?"

Billy June said to us, drawling, the way he always does when he isn't working, and lolling back in his seat like the laziest man in Southern America—which he isn't—Billy June said:

"Don't hurry me, now. Yes, there is."

"And W. P. Doran has seen it—you were there when he came out?"

Billy June smiled comfortably.

"Don't rush me—yes, I was certainly all of that."

"Well, his company is going to be organized, isn't it?"

Billy looked at his cigarette.

"If you don't crowd me, now, I'd guess that it was."

"All right, then," we said triumphantly. "All right, it's a sure winner, and we're going in—unless you want to tell us why not."

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The long, sun-browned, battle-scarred adventurer sent his eyes traveling about the circle to take us all in. Weed, my instrument-man; and Tommy Piatt, the rod-man, and Dr. Parentes' chief clerk; Enrique Almeida, and Franklin Brown, the geologist in our party, and myself, were all stirred up over this chance to get into the Maranhao Placer Mines Company. We had seen the samples Doran brought in, and although none of us had much use for Doran, we knew he really was an authority on mining. Of course we were sore at Billy June, by now. I don't think I'd ever look for a job as free adviser to people who are breaking their necks to fall into gold-mining schemes, when I come to think about it; it's a thankless job. And we weren't thanking Billy June right at this minute.

Billy looked us all over, and he took his time, too. I opened my mouth to ask him if he had anything against Doran, and he caught my eye and waved his hand.

"Don't hustle me so, *doutor*," he said languidly. "Don't push me, and I'll tell you about Doran's gold prospect. Wait a minute."

There you have Billy June, known to all the wise *hombres* from Sonora to Tierra del Fuego as "the trouble-shooter," and the man who has had more adventures in South America, and has more friends in the continent, and who can do more toward straightening out any sort of a mess—political, or business or international—than any other individual south of the Zone. Deliberate, calm, slow, patient and tireless, Billy June simply won't be hurried. But start him on a search for a lost exploring party, or a missing official document, or a man who has disappeared, or give him a commission to treat with a tribe of Indians, or ask him to settle a strike, or instruct him to go into the interior and deliver a message where white men are looked on as devils and killed at sight, and Billy June will very deliberately consider the job, accept it if it suits him, and be swallowed up around the dark corners of South America.

And when he comes back, which will be in his own good time, Billy June will have fulfilled his mission and delivered the goods. He knew W. P. Doran, the adventurer. We knew Billy knew him. And when he told us, sitting in the Cafe Amazonas in Camacim, that he would tell us about Doran's gold prospect in the Serra do Oro in the Maupi Indian country, we knew there was a story ahead.

Billy June had his cigarette going and pretty well smoked before he began. And we wriggled for a while. Then—

"You're a fine, innocent band of featherbed birds, you are!" he drawled sarcastically, turning to look us over, and through, once more. "Honest, if I didn't have you before my face and eyes I'd think I was dealing with a bunch of amateurs, and I'd recommend some kind of malted milk and a teething-ring—honest I would. You and Walter Doran! You poor little kids!"

I broke in, abruptly:

"It's all right to call names, Billy, but remember the men that have gone into this scheme. There's——"

Billy looked at me, shifting his big *chapeo* to the back of his head and grinning.

"That's it," he interrupted; "that's it—crowd me right off the trail! Jam me clear into the rocks, chief—that's the thing! I'm just going to tell you, and here you are, banging on the door and telling me it's half-past eight and the mail boat's in! Now, wait a second, can't you? Just take it—easy—say!"

I grunted, but that was the last remark I rose to contribute to the program of the evening. Billy June sat there again, gazing off at the street and fingering his cigarette, and we let him sit.

Pretty soon he threw the tobacco away with a deft flirt of his forefinger, and began over, and here's his tale of Doran's placer-gold find in the Tocantins River in the Serra do Oro region of Northeastern Brazil.

I'VE been here fourteen—no fifteen years, now. Dropped off at Rio in the November of '99 because I and old Captain Nels Sorenson—he went down with the clipper *Mary May* off Cape Horn ten years ago—couldn't get along as to my having part of one watch, at least, to sleep in.

And since that I've knocked around a good deal and found that about every man in South America, and his brother, is trying to get rich. Most of them figure it out to be done in, say, a year or two. Some of them, like your noble friend Walter Doran—and that isn't his name, too—figure a month is long enough. In fact, Doran had it shaved finer than that. He was going to do the trick in five minutes, and would

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have, too, if I hadn't put his brakes on for him and burned out his cylinders. He was going to marry Esthér Martines de Silveira, of Parnahyba.

Oh, you remember that, do you? And you remember that he didn't, don't you? And you're wondering what that's got to do with this placer region along the Tocantins River, aren't you? Something. Yes, I'd say something, anyhow.

Don't rush me now—don't excite me. I'm coming to it, working up the wind so's not to flush the end of my story before I get within shooting distance, as you might say.

All right. Doran was going to marry Esthér, and that would have been a shame. Old man de Silveira had the thing all figured out, and there was going to be a big party.

The girl wanted a *tigre* skin for a wedding present. Doran would get it for her. Fine and fuzzy! And where should he pick out to go but up into the Serra do Oro country, instead of sneaking off quietly to Therezina and buying a skin from some Indian or nigger, and lying out on the sand a day or two to get tanned up, and getting the glory and the *tigre* pelt and the girl and her money—her money, notice — all comfortable and easy, instead of—well, instead of their having to send for me—old man de Silveira and the girl.

I was in Bahia, just cleaning up after finding a steamer-trunk full of valuable documents for a crook from the States—tell you about that some time—and I came on up to make talk with Doran's pretty-soon father-in-law. I hadn't seen Doran then, remember, but they showed me his picture, and I knew him.

No use mixing up this story with what I knew about him—yarn you that some time, too — but I says to myself right there: "Now, my pretty little Senhorita Esthér, you're reddening up your big black eyes all for nothing over this fellow, because you ain't going to marry him as long as Billy June is on the job to prevent, and you're not going to care, either, when you get the thing straightened out." But I didn't tell her anything, then. Didn't tell the old gentleman either, because they were both hot for getting this sweet Walter Parsons Doran out of the Indian country, where he'd gone and disappeared and was now thirty days overdue and not a sign or a word from him, and the little girl losing a pound a day and a lot of beauty that she might well have kept.

That was the idea — Doran had gone hunting little *tigre* skins for his beloved, and now he was *perdido*, and papa was ready to give me my price and expenses to go into the Tocantins River country to find him and bring him back.

So I started. And it was the second time I'd pursued this fine, big, red buck of a man into the wilderness—once for the Government, that didn't want him loose, and now for a little girl who thought she loved him. Funny how my job brings things like this around, isn't it?

There, don't hustle me, and I'll get along faster.

I took a boat and an Indian I'd done a favor for once in 1908 in Argentina, and four *barqueiros* to work the canoe, and we left Sao Joao das Barres early in April—yes, this year—and that was the last civilization I saw for forty days. And Mr. Brown here knows the kind of civilization I left at Sao Joao because he's been there. That's right, he says. All set, then.

WELL, I didn't start out for a pleasure trip exactly. You all know there ain't many whites—even tom-fools like me that's always looking for a scrap or a scrape and never happy unless he has one or more on his hands—that's been in the Serra do Oro region and up the Tocantins River. The Indians there have kept that big, rich country back to a date of about 300 B. C. so far, and they're going to keep it back a while longer if they aren't cleaned out as slick as burning gasoline in an ant-hill.

They don't like visitors, and they show it. They tried to run a nice, clean, sharp sapling through me endways in the Serra do Pedro country in 1911, and then set fire to the stick, and how I palavered them out of that notion still has me putting my chips on the wrong number, even now. Just get the general idea that they're bad, clear bad, and that's enough for them.

I knew Doran had gone up the Tocantins River, because I trailed him that far. He had two skins when he passed Campos Salles, but they were small ones, so the Indians told us, and he'd gone on investigating for one of the old daddy *tigres* of the country, way up toward Natividad. So I kept

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worming my way along, wasting a lot of time chinning with the Indians to keep them from holding a court-martial on me, or an inquest or something, and then I lost my boat.

It was at a station called Cratto that some Portuguese had established up in there twenty years ago, gathering *carnahuba* wax, but they'd been run out and hadn't come back. We tied up and camped on the bank at night, of course, and this particular evening the Indians got one of my *barqueiros* and took him out a few rods into the brush and made preparations to peel a little skin off the soles of his feet. They let him yell without discouraging him any, and when I got there with my good Indian and the other three boatmen, they pretended to be getting their victim ready for a big celebration.

I never found any good to come of lying off and making signs to Indians, not in South America, anyhow. If they want to do you bodily disfigurement they'll probably do it, and if they don't, you might as well go up and find that out. That's the way I estimate it.

So I walked into this bunch and knocked a couple of them forty feet into the *matto* and untied my boatman. That did them good. They growled a little and talked murder and arson for my benefit, and then my Indian interpreter gave them the office, and we had a confab.

I told them I was tired of being watched —I had been, of course, all the way since I'd left the coast—and that I was in there on business that would be for their benefit, and that the sooner they caught on to that the better it would be for them—saying nothing about myself. They wanted to know what I was driving at.

I had the story sort of framed up, anyhow, and I thought this was a good time to feed it to them, and start it spreading its way around through the tribe, and I gave it to them hot and heavy.

I was up there, I said, to find a Brazilian commissioner who had come into their country to hunt *tigres* and also to bring them a message from the government. I told them that down at Rio the *governo* was getting pretty tired of having whites come into this neighborhood to get their feet skinned, or their property taken away from them, or their outfits stolen, and that the *Illustrissimo Senhor* Doran was here to give them their last chance. If they wanted to play fair the government would talk to them. If they didn't, we'd have to send in a few thousand—I guess I said hundred thousand, maybe—*soldados*, and clean them all out.

They grinned at this, but I saw that they were sort of shaky under the grins and kind of sickly around the edges. They had a brush with a detachment of soldiers down on the lower river, a few years back, and they hadn't forgotten the way rifles sound up there, and they won't till all of them that were in the fracas die off and quit telling about it. So they said they'd pass me along up to the chief's village and let me make talk to him.

I figured that the festivities had turned out better than they might have, but when we got back to the camp our boat and most of our supplies were gone where the woodtwine bindeth, or whatever it is. We were cleaned out. And then I knew that they'd most probably kicked up the shindig in the brush to draw us. But knowing how you got your ears froze doesn't help thaw 'em out, I've noticed. We were afoot, and far, far from mother.

We loaded up for a *passear de pé* the next morning, but instead of following the river I started right inland looking for Indians, and that afternoon we came down on a flock of them in a dirty little *povoacao pequena*. And there were some familiar faces there—faces I'd seen the night before.

I told 'em pleasantly that I'd come to visit 'em, and that they would be wise *homens* if they packed me off the next morning to make talk to the chief. They didn't want to do it; but they didn't want nearly so much not to, supposing, say, that I was really what I pretended to be, and that Doran was what I pretended he was, and that army rifles still worked the way they'd worked a few years before.

So they had a confab, and the upshot of it was that they gave us a guide and three or four *cargadeiros* to murder us if they saw a chance, and sent us on our way at daybreak. When we got to my destination I found Doran's trail all over the place, but no Doran.

The chief knew I was coming, of course— Huh? Oh, Doran's trail, eh? Well, now, don't crowd me, and don't ask too many questions.

But I will say this much: there was a brand-new rifle strutting around the *praça*

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under the arm of a dirty, fat-paunched assistant chief, for one thing; and there was a hat that had come fresh from the States for another thing—crowning the top of a leading *distincto*. And there was a story of a stranger and an Indian girl that was very evidently stirring up considerable commotion in the region, and it was then I knew I had your sweet friend Doran located.

Oh, yes, he was going to marry Senhorita Esthér, I haven't forgotten that, either. I'm only telling you what I found, and proved, too. So don't worry me nor hurry me, will you?

As I started to say, the big chief had had runners in with news of the *chefe do governo* coming, and he did me the honor to have a special program down for me that first night. We ate tapir, and big red bananas done in grease, and drank *aquardente de canna*, and they gave me a dance, and then we made talk.

It seemed that *Illustrissimo Senhor* Doran hadn't been through there yet, but when he came—and so forth.

"Well," says I, "I'll wait for him. He'll show up, all right."

The chief wriggled.

"How long?" he says.

"Oh, a few days," I says. And then I sighted that rifle I'd seen parading around in the crowd, and I walked over and took it away from the Indian that was cuddling it. "Very nice gun," I says to the chief, and he grunts.

I said, "You think, *Excellente* Doran will be along with his message pretty quick, I guess."

My Indian interpreter may have made it a little stronger. The chief wriggled.

"Chief think two days," the interpreter says.

"Tell him I think he'll be here tomorrow," I says. There wasn't any scenery, or points of interest around that region that I could get up any excitement about seeing. As far as I was concerned I was ready to go soon, or sooner, if possible.

"Chief say maybe so," says Procopio, and I let it go at that.

THAT night they put me and my men into a *casita* to make ourselves comfortable, and, according to the custom of the country, as they politely informed me, took away our guns and gave us a guard. They overlooked the automatic under my left armpit at the time, but later in the evening two of them found I had it and could use it, and five or six more left our hospitable quarters in a hurry, and with American lead spattering around them promiscuous.

When I could count the casualties I walked my interpreter straight through the blue-black night to the chief's hang-out and I haled him out of bed and talked turkey to him.

"Your crew got two of my boatmen," I said to him, and poked him under the heart with my automatic—with a new clip of cartridges in the magazine, too—to wake him up to the gravity of the situation.

He was surprised and chagrined.

"Tell this dirty nigger," says I to the interpreter, "that he can't come any of his interior diplomacy on me. I know he sent that party to get me, and he knows it, and he knows I know it. So we'll talk only business, please."

The chief looked at my automatic and I prodded him with it again as a favor to him. My Indian said—

"What does your excellency wish?"

Says I: "Tell him that my excellency is sore, and is going away from this place to find *Illustrissimo Senhor* Doran and his papers from the Brazilian government, and that if he or any of his outfit interferes or monkeys with me, that I'll hold him personally responsible." And I says, also: "You can put that personal responsibility any-way you want to. But it means that I'll perforate his tall homely body with holes you can put a watch and chain through if he as much as opens his head."

So the Indian talked straight language, and the chief grunted and tried to get my boy to assure me that the unwarranted and unauthorized assault on my personal body that night had been a gross malfeasance in office and a treason against the chief of the tribe.

"Oh, slush!" says I, and tapped the big chief's ribs again for good-by, and went away from the place.

We gathered up the two boatmen who were left, rolled up our little outfit, and trekked to the home of the family of the girl that had had the misfortune to make eyes at your lovely friend Walter Parsons Doran. I had them rout the head of the house out, and he came blinking, and I poked my automatic into his solar plexus.

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"I've come up to take this Don Juan Doran back to Rio," I explained, through my talk-boy. "Where is he?"

The old fellow gibbered and gestured and waved his arms. My boy says:

"I can't make him. It's something about the Serra do Oro."

"Ah, it is, is it?" I said, and that gave me an idea. "All right," I said, "you just tell Uncle John here to climb into his sandals and his walking-stick and come along."

And he came, whining.

I'd heard of the placer-gold deposits up along the head of the Tocantins River, but I knew well enough that no whites had ever gotten in there and out again alive. At least none up to that time. Doran hadn't been content with roughing it with the natives and making eyes at the native women —he'd gone gold crazy.

I knew now where I'd find him, and we walked old Papa Indian two nights and two days, and on the third evening we came into the little village where the gold-workers live, and I saw a sight I'll not soon forget.

There was a burnt-orange hill back of this village, and a long slope down toward the bed of the river, and on this slope there was so much gold that you could see it where it lay. I walked along, kicking the stuff. It was in nuggets and flakes, and most of it just needed to be picked up and hammered into dollars, and stamped, and the job was done.

Above us they were scratching the metal up in baskets, and farther along was a sort of cradle—clumsy enough, to be sure, but better than nothing—and in it they were washing placer sand. About seventy Indians were on the job, and they handled the precious metal as carelessly as though they were making bricks.

It was Doran's gold-mine—the one he wants to sell you fellows stock in. You wanted to know if there is gold there, and I'm telling you there is. But wait.

I had our outraged old parent worked up now to the point of helping us find Doran. I think he harbored designs on my man, but I was watching him. He circulated around among the heathen, and the next morning led me to a *fazenda* a mile up the hills and turned me loose on the natives there.

Understand, I wasn't any more welcome up in this gold country than a case of hives, but I carried my automatic on my left flank and walked right through them all as though they were in my mines and I'd fire 'em if they soldiered on the job. The whole outfit had their eyes on me, and the night before a runner had gone back to tell the chief I was among them. I knew how ticklish the situation was, but nobody else knew that I did, and I wasn't going to encourage them to think about that part of it. Not hardly.

Well, I found Doran, cooped up in a sort of dug-out in the hills and I talked to him through the stone door. He was crying with hunger and worry, and it was some time before I could get sense out of him, or into him.

I said: "Well, you've made a pretty fair average mess of things, Doran, my fine *tigre* hunter. Do you want to get out?"

He said he did, and he said it emphatically and even tearfully.

"How do you reckon it can be accomplished?" I said.

"You'll have to manage it, Mister June," says he. "Mister June!" And the very last time I'd seen him, which was in one of the police offices in Rio, he had called me something else, and meant it.

"Have you told these niggers up here what you came for?" says I.

"Shooting little *tigres* for their skins," says he.

"Not to mention making love to their girls and prancing up into their gold country to see what you can see, eh?" says I.

Mr. Walter Parsons Doran sniffled.

"For Heaven's sake, don't rub it in, Mister June," says he. "I'm to be killed tomorrow morning, and it's no laughing matter."

"You're right," says I; "it isn't. Because if they kill you tomorrow morning, that'll get their spirits up and they'll kill me the next morning. Well," says I, "hasn't it occurred to you that you are ambassador extraordinary from the Brazilian government to come up here and talk with the Indians and make a peace treaty with them?"

"How do you mean, June?" says he.

"I mean what I say," says I. "How long have they had you cooped up here in this Dutch oven?"

"Ten days," says he.

"Have they been to see you?"

"No," Doran said. "A boy shoves me a little *farinha* once a day and a jug of water."

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"That's better," I said. "Then you haven't had any chance, since they bottled you up, to rave about their conduct and to threaten and abuse them?"

"Not any," says he. "And I wouldn't have had the nerve to do it, either. They captured me the first night I was in the chief's village about two weeks ago. After that—well, when those Indians made such a yell about the girl, y' understand, I told them that I was an important man and that they'd better let me go. They laughed."

"I don't blame them a bit," says I. "But you've played the game very lucky, and now we'll contrive a little."

I WENT away for about an hour and figured, and when I came back I had the whole scheme.

The first thing I did was to send an order down to the gold village for them to send runners for the chief and all his big men. I made it strong, although I knew well enough they'd already sent word that I was there and I was guessing that the chief would be storming in about the next night or the following morning on his own hook. Then I told the heathen who had Doran in his coop that he was a big chief from Rio, and that they were to turn him loose to meet the head of their tribe who was on his way up from below to make talk with him.

That part of my play was pure bluff, but it worked. That is, bluff and my automatic. That helped, probably.

Then I took Doran down to the gold village next day and walked him into the principal *casa* and decorated him with gold nuggets and a necklace of lumps of the pure stuff that I appropriated from one of the Indians without so much as if you please, but with my faithful gun worrying him in the chest. Then I had them fix up some food for Doran, and I stood up behind him and waited on him.

He gorged himself like a boy at Thanksgiving time in the States, and pretty soon the gold-workers were circling in to look on, and were beginning to be impressed with the ceremony themselves. Doran had some sense that I'd poured into his ear, and he abused me shamefully and kicked the Indians when they came too near him, and cursed awful throughout the whole party.

We had the fear of the Brazilian government sown in their hearts, all right. But I wasn't so sure how it would work with the big chief.

That night I planned out the whole schedule and taught it to Doran, a word at a time. The Indians hadn't taken anything from him but his watch and his guns and his Texas sombrero, and I made him frisk himself and give me everything there was in his clothes. He had a small wallet of Brazilian bank-notes, two *contas* of *reis*, I guess, a government map, a fountain pen, a hypodermic syringe and strychnia tablets for snakes, and something else that he stuffed back into an inner pocket.

"What's that?" says I.

"A private document," says he, stiffening up. "I'll keep that."

"Oh, will you?" says I. "And what is this private document that you think so much of?"

He colored up a little, I thought.

"It wouldn't be of any use to you," he said, "and I'd prefer to keep it."

"Very well," says I, getting up and putting on my *chapeo*. "Keep it as tight as you please, and I hope it does you a lot of good, and I wish you a pleasant death," says I.

"Here, wait a minute!" says Doran. "What's the matter? You aren't going? What are you deserting me for?"

"I'm deserting you just like the sailors desert a sinking ship," says I, "because they're afraid they'll be taken down with it," I says.

He pulled out his document then, and his hand was shaking.

"Take it, Mister June," he said, almost crying. "But have pity on me and don't tell what you've found out up here when we get home."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" says I, and casts my glance over his private document. I didn't turn a hair or bat a whisker then.

"This," says I, "will serve a double purpose and will do very nicely," I says.

"How do you mean—a double purpose?" says W. P. Doran.

"Not anything that you'll be interested in now," says I. "The main thing for you to do is to learn to speak your piece for tomorrow or next day when the big chief comes."

So he learned it. And when he had, and saw the way the game was to work, I gave him back his private document. He put it inside his shirt and went to sleep from sheer

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exhaustion, and I sat there and watched him till morning, because I wasn't taking any chances with those niggers—not even after impressing them by waiting myself on Walter Parsons Doran, the ambassador from Rio.

The chief came in that afternoon, blazing wrath and looking for trouble. He sent word ahead that they were to put Doran under double guard and have him served for breakfast the next morning, and then he wanted to see me. When he came in and spotted Doran, sitting up on a stool I'd specially decorated for him, and with about a hundred pounds of pure gold jewelry hanging on him, the old head-man pretty nearly had apoplexy.

I aggravated him a little with my thumb. I didn't care about pulling my gun on him unless the worst came to the worst, and told him he'd better come in quietly and act respectful, because *Excellente* Doran was mad, and there were fine prospects that he'd send word back to Rio and have the whole nationality shot down in cold blood.

"Here you are," says I, through my interpreter, who was getting awful sick of his job by this time and wishing he was back in the lower country again; "here you are, balling the whole enterprise up by putting his supreme excellence, Walter Parsons Doran, into the cooler, when all the time he was trying to get to you with a paper of the most transcendental importance," says I. "You're a fine guy for the crazy house," I says, "but you're a mighty weak sister as an Indian chief."

"Paper?" says he to the interpreter. "What does the large man of a such great highness make talk about?" That was the way I got it from my interpreter, in Portuguese.

"Come over and make your apologies to Mr. Doran and you'll find out," says I, and I knew I had him then.

Curiosity would have done his business for him if nothing else. So we went into the place and the big chief made a half-way bow, but not any too cordial, and they talked.

DORAN started out by giving the homely old *chefe* blue fits and cataleptic convulsions. Said he'd been trying ever since his unlawful arrest and detention to get word to the chief, and that they'd refused to carry his messages. Said he'd heard the old fellow was a double-distilled and ball-bearing idiot of three hundred varieties, but had never credited it until now. Lately he said he'd discovered that the report was correct as far as it went, but that it hadn't been put strongly enough.

This was the line of talk that I had instructed Doran, in and he played it pretty well, although he wasn't any too sure of himself. If the Indian hadn't been sort of impressed by our gall he might have noticed that the ambassador extraordinary wished he was well out of the mess, and was ready to lie down and cry at a minute's notice. But we got by that part of the elocution and came on to the next.

Doran said he had come up to visit and make talk with the Indians.

"How about hunting little *tigres?*" says the chief.

"Down in Rio," says Doran, with me at his elbow, "they said you were a good Indian, and pleasant with company. I came as a guest, amusing myself with the little *tigres* as I came."

"Sorry," says the chief. "We misunderstood. I hadn't seen you myself. Blunder on our part. But how about—" He mentioned Doran's love-affair with the native girl.

Doran had to play his own hand there, and I watched him squirm and enjoyed it. He made a lame excuse, tried to get by by flattering the Indians, stuttered over it, and stalled.

How about the gold he had come up here and stolen?

This was a new one on me, and I let Doran play it alone, of course. He put on his outraged-innocence face again and said that if the chief couldn't permit an honored guest to roam about a little and pick up a few souvenirs of an otherwise pleasant visit, then he was a pie-eyed and unwashed descendant of a people of no consequence, and Ambassador Doran would go back to Rio and say so.

I whispered to Doran: "There's your chance to start your paper talk, quick, because he's thinking of some more of your clandestine violations of the political code of this section, and you'd better head him."

So Doran pulls out his paper.

"I was dispatched to your country," he says as big and important as possible, "to treat with you concerning this gold land."

The Indians began to sit up and notice things then.

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"Yes," says Doran; "you may not know it, but all this gold region has been surveyed, and it all belongs to Brazil."

There was an awful howl at this. The chief talked so fast that the interpreter was gasping for his second wind and could only make signs. But Doran stood up and spread out his map.

Here was where I thought I'd better take a hand, because I saw the Indians bunching up and muttering, and the play had to go just so or there would be a quick curtain. I made Doran a deep bow, whispering to him to sit down and scowl, and he did it, and folded his arms like the villain in "Twice Betrayed," and I jerked the interpreter boy over to me and began to make language.

"Calm yourselves, brothers," I said. "His excellency, Mister Doran of Rio Janeiro, is touched in the temper and too mad to talk because of your actions," I says. "If you'll gather closer and look I'll explain this enterprise to you and you'll be glad you came."

They were ready to find out, I'll say that for 'em, and they stepped up to have a look. I showed them the lay of the land—Doran had a pretty good map—and the river and their gold mountain, and then I took out Doran's fountain pen from his pocket, and that made their eyes bulge, and I put a circle around the gold hill and the nugget field. They began to get the thing through their heads then, and the chief wanted to know what came next.

"Well," says I, "if you'll square yourself with Mister Doran, here, and give him back his gun and his *chapeo*, and gather up my things for me, if you've got them with you, and give us this gold for a souvenir, and promise to quit stealing and killing and man-handling when Brazilians or other *estrangeiros* come up into this country, then Mister Doran is authorized to deed you this gold land as a present."

That took their breath away, and they stood trying to think it out. I waited for that to sink in, and then I said—

"What's more, he's got the treaty with him."

Then I kicked Doran's shins and he unfolded his private document and spread it out. It was embossed and sealed and signed and ready to deliver—to somebody. And although it wasn't a deed to the gold land the Indians already owned, they thought it was, and their eyes hung out and they began to whisper.

I let them alone for two minutes, and it was a long two minutes, I'm telling you. If they fell for my idiotic theater-play of giving them their own country by means of a phoney ambassador and a counterfeit state document, Doran and I and my party were safe, and as good as on our way home. But if they didn't—well, we wouldn't have come home, that's all.

The chief grunted after a while and said his old men had agreed with him that they'd make the Government the promises we wanted, and would give us our stuff. They did—all but my boat. They would have given me that if I'd wanted to go back down the river for it.

I happened to know the range just east of this gold village, and I knew that about a hundred kilometers beyond it I'd find a trail that led down to Sao José, and so to Parnahyba. So that night, while they were getting a feast ready for us, Doran told them we'd have to get back to carry the glad tidings to Rio, and they gave us some *pao de milho* and dried goat meat and about ten pounds of nuggets apiece, and kissed us good-by. And we didn't stop to hunt little *tigres* on the way.

When we got into Sao José, Doran began to get anxious about how much I was going to tell of his story when we got to Parnahyba. He said that he was going to be married as soon as he got back there, to a lady he knew, and it might be embarrassing.

Then I told him—

"Friend Walter Parsons Doran," says I, "you've got to guess again. You're not going back there to marry this lady, because I happen to know who she is, and I know her father, and they don't want to have you in the family—or at least they won't when I get there."

"What do you mean?" says he, turning red. We were out of the Indian country now, and he was getting his spunk back by degrees.

"I mean that you're not fit to marry that little girl, and you know it. And what makes it worse for you, I know it. You go on back there to Parnahyba, if you want to, and tell the girl's father that you've changed your mind." And after he'd thought it over for one night he said he'd do it.

He did. I didn't hear any more about him for a while. I got my money from *Senhor* Martines de Silveira and I told him and

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the girl a little—enough—about Mister Walter Parsons Doran. They fell on my neck then, and the old man gave me a green diamond that I sent to my mother up in Monterey, California, and *Senhorita* Esthér burned Doran's letters and sent him back his presents.

Now he bobs up with a gold-mine. Go into it if you want to, but your money should be kissed good-by when it leaves, because it won't come back, ever. That's all. That's about all.

WE GRINNED at each other feebly. The gold was there, as Billy June, the trouble-shooter, had said. Undoubtedly it was there, and undoubtedly it would stay there. I laughed.

"And even if a company could get in there for it, Billy, you and Doran gave it to the Indians, didn't you?"

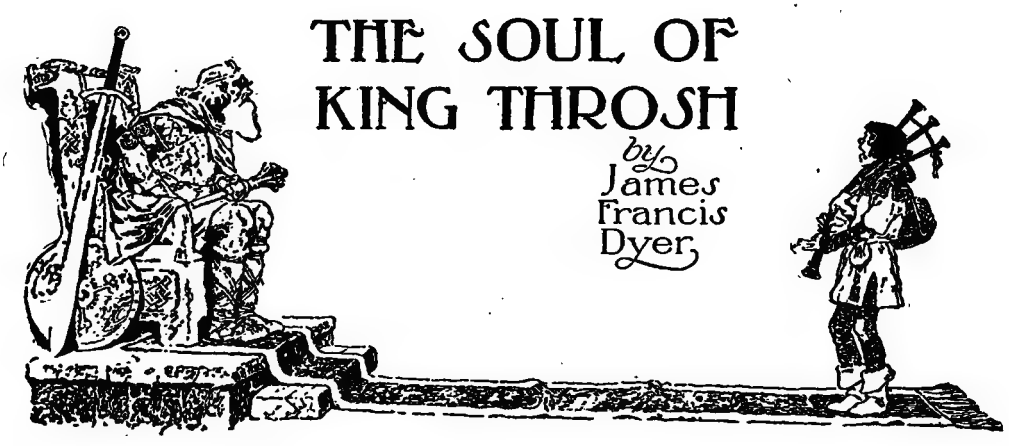
Billy June grinned.

"Again," he said. "Yes, we gave 'em their own gold ground, with as pretty a deed of sale as you ever saw, too."

"By the way, Billy June," said Checkers Weed, the instrument-man, "you didn't tell us what that private document of Doran's was."

Billy June straightened his face.

"Didn't?" he questioned drawlingly. "Now, that's ridiculous. Don't crowd me, and I'll tell you. It was only Doran's marriage license—and he never got another."



THE SOUL OF KING THROSH

by James Francis Dyer

Author of "The White Queen of Sandakan."

FIFTEEN hundred children trooped down the stone steps from Public School 286, and Larry Regan, the school janitor, watched them with a kindly eye as they filed past him. It was a glorious Spring afternoon, and Larry, standing on the steps, watched the children as they skipped down the big broad pavement to where Casey, the policeman, waited to guide them across Broadway.

"Whenever I see childher skippin' an' hoppin' like lambs in a field I think of King Throsh," said Regan.

"Why, Larry?" I ventured to inquire.

"Sure, an' wasn't it because the little spalpeens couldn't keep still, that he got into his everlastin' torment?" asked Regan. "But I forget. I suppose you don't know the story either."

I confessed my appalling ignorance.

"It's little you know of Irish history then," commented Regan. "For King Throsh was one of the greatest kings that ever ruled in Ireland. It's a shame, so it is, that the childher aren't taught about him. Yesterday I asked four of the boys of 8B did they ever hear of him, an' they said they hadn't. Faith, I doubt if Dr. Nicholson, the principal, who's as bright a man as ever taught a child the three R's, knows anything at all about him."

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"And how did you come to know about him, Larry?" I interjected, fearing he would get off the track of the story in favor of philosophizing on the rough deal handed to Irish history.

"Me father used to tell about him in a corner of the kitchen," answered Regan, "an' it's the blessed Father Cassidy that used to say that me father told it better than any man from Carrigboy to Cushendall. Sure, me father knew——"

But, before he could say more, I skilfully backed him into his little office at the foot of the stair. In his worn old easy chair I knew he would tell me the story of King Throsh. And he began:

AH, KING THROSH was a great man. A wonderful man. He had a sword-hand that was the strongest in Ireland, an' that's sayin' a lot. There were some big men around when Throsh was alive, men that could chop a sheep in two with a broadsword as easy as winkin'. That was the time Ireland bred the fighters. Not that she doesn't breed 'em nowadays, but they do a lot more with their tongues an' less with their hands.

Well, King Throsh had an itch in his sword-arm so bad that he couldn't keep still. He would sleep at nights with his big broadsword that was five feet an' three inches long hangin' beside his bed, an' every now an' then he'd put out his hand an' finger it, an' then he'd call out to the guard beyond the door.

"Is there anythin' doing?" he would say to the guard.

"Nothin', your Highness," the guard would answer.

"There's no enemy in sight?" Throsh would ask with a mournful sigh.

"Divil an enemy, your Highness," the guard would answer back.

Then King Throsh would give a great groan to show how grieved he was because there was no one near to test the strength of his sword-arm, an' he'd roll over in the bed thinkin' that he'd die before any one came along to give him a big fight.

Well, one fine spring day a one-eyed piper came up the hill to the Castle of Throsh, a piper with a red head an' a mouth that my father says was the biggest mouth they ever saw in that part of the country, an' he asked permission to sing to the king.

"Sing me songs of fights," said King Throsh. "Songs of fights an' of brave men."

"Willingly, your Highness," said the piper, an' he rolled his one eye 'round like a marble in a quart pot as he tuned his pipes.

The piper started to sing, an' all his songs were of one man. He sang of Red O'Neill, an' faith, Throsh was interested from the moment he started. It was just the kind of story that King Throsh was waitin' for.

Me father used to tell how Throsh's head came forward as the piper sang, an' his neck lengthened like the head of a green snake peepin' out of a hole to see if there's a grasshopper handy that he could make a meal out of. Sure, the story held him in its grip like the sand rope that the fairy flung 'round Pete O'Grady, an' that's a story that I must tell you at some other time.

The head of Throsh came forward an' he moved nearer an' nearer to the piper so that he nearly fell off his big throne that was carved out of a great black rock that was thrown up one night from the Bog of Keelbeg. An' the piper, seein' that he held the king, rolled his one eye an' chanted so that his voice went up through the big halls of the castle an' frightened the bats that used to sleep in the towers.

He was a great storyteller, was the one-eyed piper. He told stories of Red O'Neill an' the fightin' strength of his arm, an' the face of Throsh got that green with temper that you couldn't tell where the collar of his jacket ended an' where his flesh began. You can just imagine how mad it got Throsh, who thought there wasn't a man from Fair Head to Kinsale that could touch him in a sword-play.

"Well, the fool piper didn't see what a temper he was puttin' Throsh in by tellin' him that there was a man in Ireland that he couldn't beat, till all of a sudden, sir, the king gripped his mace, which was as heavy as the curse of Cromwell, an' he flung it at the head of the piper.

"To the divil with you, you windy jackass!" he cried. "How dare you stand before me face an' tell me that there's a man in Ireland that I can't lick?"

Well, the mace hit the piper under the ear an' it floored him completely, an' then King Throsh was mad with himself because there were a thousand things that he wanted to ask the piper about Red O'Neill. He

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thought he had killed the one-eyed story-teller, an' he was a crazy man entirely. He sent for a quart of his own private whisky that was made specially for him in a wonderful copper still behind the castle, an' he poured a glass of it down the throat of the piper.

FAITH, that whisky was so good that it would make a man come back from the very doors of Heaven. The piper opened his one eye an' he looked at King Throsh, then he put up his hand an' rubbed his ear where the king's mace had hit him.

"It was a sore blow," said he, lookin' at the king, an' then turnin' his lonely glim on the whisky bottle.

"Have another," said the king, "an' forget about the blow. There are some questions I want to ask you."

The one-eyed piper, so me father says, put the whisky bottle to his head an' he kept swiggin' away at it till Throsh put out his hand an' rapped it against the piper's teeth so that he loosened a couple of 'em in his big mouth.

"Faith, it's dry you are," said Throsh, as the piper was feelin' his loosened teeth. "It's a pity the Irish Sea isn't whisky an' then you could drink us a path right across to England."

"It's good whisky," said the piper.

"It is," said the king. "But like the blessed Saint Maurice who wandered into hell by mistake, it's somethin' good goin' to a bad place. How about this Red O'Neill? Is he big?"

"Big?" says the piper. "Why, he's as big as the Rock of Kiler against which Brian Boru measured himself."

Well, King Throsh stroked his beard when the piper told him that, an' he reached out an' fingered the edge of his big broadsword. Things were gettin' interestin' for Throsh.

"An' has he a big arm?" says the king.

"Arm is it?" said the piper. "Faith, he has an arm that's thicker than the seven trees that grow on St. Columbkille's grave. But he never uses his right arm," says he.

"What?" cried King Throsh. "Do you mean to say he doesn't use his right arm in fightin'?"

"I do so," said the piper.

"An' why?" said King Throsh.

"Well," said the piper, an' he kept a shrewd eye on the king for fear he'd fling somethin' at him again. "They say that there's not a man in Ireland that he can't whip with his left hand, so what will be the use of him tirin' his right arm for nothin'?"

When the piper said that, King Throsh got mad completely. Sure he was mad through an' through. He let a bellow out of him that me father said could be heard at Dunbawn, which was twenty leagues away from the Castle of Throsh, an' he called to his captains an' his lieutenants to make ready for war.

Sure, kings then were just the same as they are now. If some one made a remark about one of 'em, hintin' that he had bandy legs or a pug nose or a squinty eye, it would start a war. Kings have always been the same. They're vain people, take 'em by an' large.

In those days, though, it was mostly their sword-arms they were proud of. They were like game roosters struttin' around the country lookin' for some one who could give 'em battle, an' when King Throsh was told that Red O'Neill had been in the habit of beatin' all comers with his left hand, nothin' could stop him from marchin' out to O'Neill's bailiwick to give him battle.

Me father says that every man in the kingdom that King Throsh ruled over went with him. It was a great army. There were horsemen an' spearsmen an' swordsmen an' bowmen, an' the sun shinin' on their polished armor an' their big swords an' spears made them look like a river of silver as they marched down toward the south. Sure, Ireland never produced a finer army, an' she's produced not a few.

They moved off across the cornfields an' down the big white roads that led down to Red O'Neill's country, an' the colleens followed them along the roads weepin' an' prayin' an' tyin' daisy chains around the necks of their favorite boys who looked so smart an' bright as they marched away. King Throsh rode at their head on a big white charger that pranced so much that they say he never had more than one foot on the ground at a time unless he was sleepin'. Me father says that a fairy brought the white horse one night to the stable of Throsh an' left him there in exchange for a black divil of a horse that had kicked a saint who was walkin' up the big road leadin' to the castle. An' the horse was

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covered with cloth of gold in which were emeralds as big as goose eggs.

Well, sir, they marched an' marched with the pipers playin' in front of them. Great tunes they played in those days. Me father used to whistle one of 'em that was called "The Seven White Maids of Larne," an' it was a tune that would set a whole countryside marchin' at a quick step. They don't play tunes like those nowadays.

Well, they came to the borders of the country where Red O'Neill lived in state, an' King Throsh halted his army an' sent four of his captains to O'Neill, tellin' him that he might as well lay down his arms because he was goin' to be put out of business for good an' all. Now Red O'Neill was in a bad humor the mornin' the four captains called. His liver was troublin' him. So he cut off the heads of the three smallest captains, put them in a bag, an' started the biggest of the four with 'em back to King Throsh.

"Tell him," says O'Neill, 'that if he comes an inch farther, his dead men will make the crops in that part of the country grow bigger next year than ever they've grown. An' your own head would be in the bag," says he, cuffin' the captain in the ear, "if you could see your way back without it."

Well, there was the divil an' all to pay when the captain came back with the three heads in the bag. King Throsh roared like a madman. The pipers started to play all along the line, an' the big army moved forward. Me father says that the greatest war that the world ever saw started then, the bloodiest war. When they used to tell him about Waterloo an' the Crimea an' the war with America in '76, he used to laugh.

"Sure, they weren't wars," he'd say. "They were just little scrimmages."

There was a little hoppy-legged law clerk who used to do dirty eviction business for Lord Manners, an' Hoppy-leg used to contradict me father. He thought he knew more than me father, an' there were many who were fool enough to think the same.

"If it was a great war, Mr. Regan," he'd say, "why isn't it down in history?"

"Because," says me father, an' you can see me father was a wise man from the answer he gave him, "because," says he, "they were all so busy fightin' then that there was no one to write about it. It was blood they spilt then, not ink." An' then he'd look at the little clerk with a cold eye an' say, "An' it's a pity they don't do it now, because it would be better for Ireland."

An' little Hoppy-leg, thinkin' over the ink that he spilt on the eviction writs, used to squirm when me father turned the laugh against him. The people in the town hated him and his warrants.

Well, the army of King Throsh started to burn an' pillage as they advanced. They put men, women, an' children to the sword. They burned the little farms an' the villages, the towns an' the big cities, an' the people fled before 'em. It was a terrible war.

King Throsh on his big white horse that used to stand first on one leg an' then on another, led his army across the countryside an' there was nothin' but smokin' farms an' burnin' towns after they passed by. An' it was all done because Red O'Neill was supposed to have a bigger sword-arm than him! You see, we haven't changed much in hundreds of years. One king says "Boo!" to another today an' they send out their armies at each other just as they did in the days of King Throsh.

Red O'Neill fell back before King Throsh an' his big army. Sure, the O'Neill knew something of strategy. Every day King Throsh thought that he'd catch up with him, but Red O'Neill was doin' the backstep better than Paddy McDonough did it when he had the boxin' match with the divil. Red O'Neill was movin' back an' back, lurin' King Throsh farther into his own country.

"The farther he comes," says O'Neill, "the farther he'll have to go back when we wallop him."

So he led Throsh on an' on, an' Throsh was as mad as a one-legged hornet as he followed him.

AN' THEN, one fine Spring mornin', Throsh got out of his bed an' looked out of his tent on the flap of which were five hares in solid silver, an' there before him was the army of Red O'Neill drawn up in battle array. An' it was a great army, too.

The mornin' sun glinted on the spears that ran like a ribbon of silver for three leagues an' more. An' their swordsmen were standin' four deep in a line that me

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father said was longer than the line of spearsmen. Their horsemen covered a plain that was seven miles square, an' their flags of gold an' green were flyin' in the little breezes that came across the Drumgool Mountains. Me father said it was one of the biggest armies that was ever put on a battlefield, an' me father knew a little, because the priest, Father Cassidy, loved to argue with him upon all matters that could be talked about.

Well, when King Throsh saw the army of Red O'Neill, he let a roar of joy out of him. He buckled on his breastplate an' his thighplates an' his big helmet that was made of gold. Then they lifted him up on his big white horse an' gave him his broadsword that was five feet an' three inches long.

"Now," says he. "We'll have at them!"

Well, he roared out another order an' down the slope his men charged to meet the men of Red O'Neill. "Waterloo," said me father, "was a little cockfight compared to the battle that started then."

It was the bloodiest battle that was ever fought. King Throsh's men rode down on Red O'Neill's men, an' Red O'Neill's men rode back on King Throsh's, hackin' an' cuttin' an' thrustin' an' whackin' each other as if they were mortal enemies. An' the pity of it was that they'd no grievance against each other at all, at all. The whole fight was because the one-eyed piper told King Throsh that there wasn't a man in Ireland that Red O'Neill couldn't beat with his left hand.

Me father said they fought like demons. A little river that was between them flowed red from their blood so that the fishes died in it by the thousand. An' the heather shone red in the sunlight, an' the cries of the dyin' horses an' the dyin' men could be heard miles away.

King Throsh rode up an' down the line like a madman lookin' for Red O'Neill an' yellin' out to O'Neill's men to trot out their leader so that he could do battle with him. They say that Throsh fought that day as no man ever fought. The blessed Lord alone knows how many he killed or how many his army killed. Me father used to say that there was a million killed in the battle, an' I wouldn't be a bit surprised, because Ireland's never been the same since that war. Sure, there were cities all over that part of the country as big as Dublin before King Throsh went pillagin' through the country lookin' for Red O'Neill just because he heard that O'Neill had a bigger sword-arm than him.

Throsh rode up an' down, stabbin' and cuttin' an' screamin' out questions to every one of O'Neill's men.

"Where is the coward?" he cried. "Where is the man that can beat any man in Ireland with his left hand?"

"You'll find him directly," they would cry out to him, "an' then you'll be sorry you ran into him."

"I'll never find him!" said Throsh. "Never!"

Throsh's right arm was gettin' tired with every swipe he made at the head of one of O'Neill's men. Sure, it was cunnin' of O'Neill to keep out of the way of Throsh till he tired his arm. Five feet three of a sword-blade, as me father used to say, weighs a little more than a goose's feather if you swing it all day.

Now Throsh was ridin' down the line in the late afternoon, still screamin' out for a man big enough to fight him, when all of a sudden he saw a big red divil on a big black horse gallopin' at him, an' he knew it was O'Neill. The man on the black horse was covered with blood an' foam, an' me father said he looked a terrible fightin' man as he rode at King Throsh.

"You're O'Neill?" said Throsh, spurrin' at him.

"The same," said O'Neill mighty polite.

"I've come to kill you," said Throsh.

"A lot have come to do that," said O'Neill, "but we've been so hospitable to them that they never wanted to leave these parts. It's the charm that's in this," said he, whackin' at Throsh's head with his big sword, "that they can't tear themselves away from."

He laughed when he said that, an' King Throsh noticed that he carried his sword in his left hand, which was an insult to Throsh, who was one of the best fighters in all Ireland.

"I'll use your red hair to stuff me saddle with," said Throsh. "An' here's at you."

Well, it was a great fight they fought then. It was such a great fight that all the men on either side that weren't dead stopped fightin' to look at the two of them. Me father says that the big black horse an' the big white horse fought as their riders fought, bitin' an' kickin' at each other as

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Red O'Neill chopped at King Throsh an' King Throsh chopped at Red O'Neill. It was a tremendous battle.

The sun went down an' the moon came up an' they were still at it, ridin' 'round an' 'round each other, proddin' an' thrustin', an' the two big horses screamin' with pain an' temper. But King Throsh was pressin' Red O'Neill mighty hard.

You see, the fact that O'Neill had his sword in his left hand made Throsh a crazy man, an' he took chances that he wouldn't have taken at other times. He made some murderous thrusts at O'Neill an' it took O'Neill all his time to dodge them.

An' then O'Neill did somethin' that let the watchers know that he was up against a good man. All of a sudden as he backed his black horse, he turned his big sword from his left hand to his right, an' then he rode at Throsh like a red-headed demon. Me father says there was no hope for Throsh then. O'Neill with his sword in his right hand was equal to six men.

He drove King Throsh back an' back till he had him on the edge of a black bog that was gurglin' an' groanin' as if it wanted somethin' to fall into its empty stomach. Throsh knew that he was beaten, but he wouldn't give in.

"Do you surrender?" cried O'Neill.

"King Throsh never surrenders," said Throsh.

"You've said your last word," said O'Neill, an' he drove his big sword clean through King Throsh an' toppled him backward into the bog.

THAT was the end of the fight, but now I must tell you what me father said happened to Throsh after it was all over. Accordin' to me father's story, Throsh woke up in the other world an' found that a big angel, a fine athletic, upstandin' fellow, had him by the ear. An' it hurt Throsh's dignity for any one to hold him by the ear.

"What do you mean?" said Throsh, bold as bold could be an' pretty mad that an angel would dare to hold his ear. "What are you doin' with me ear?"

"I'm leading you up for judgment," says the angel.

"But I'm King Throsh," said the king.

"You was," said the angel, who was a polite angel an' one who didn't wish to create any argument with his charges.

"Well, leave go of me ear!" said the king.

"Don't be irritable," said the angel. "You know that Red O'Neill gave you somethin' for bein' irritable yesterday."

Well, when the angel mentioned Red O'Neill, King Throsh got in a howlin' temper. He tried to break away from the angel, but the angel held him tight. Throsh opened his mouth to abuse him, but just then a voice came out of a little cloud bank that was in front of him, an' Throsh became as quiet as a mouse in a bread-tin.

"Who is he that is before me?" said the voice, speakin' from the cloud.

" 'Tis a man from Ireland," said the angel.

"I'm a king," said Throsh, gettin' mad again at not bein' called by his title.

"Shut up!" says the angel. "I'll do the talkin'," says he. Then, turnin' his face to the little cloud, he says, "His name is Throsh, an' he's just stirred up a war in Ireland that's been the cause of so many deaths that all the reception angels have been run off their legs bringin' in the souls of the people that have been murdered down there. Men, women, an' little children," said the angel. "A million or more of 'em."

"An' what has he got to say for himself?" says the voice.

The angel pinched King Throsh's ear.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" says he. "Speak up, quick!"

"It was Red O'Neill that did it," said Throsh. "He boasted that he'd a bigger sword-arm than meself."

"An' is it because he said that he'd a bigger sword-arm than you that you killed a million people?" asked the angel. "Were you that vain that you went out an' murdered men, women, an' children because another man said that he was a better fighter than you? Was it for a word passed in jest that you burned the homes an' killed the little gossoons?"

Well, Throsh couldn't say a word when the angel asked him those questions. He just stood there like an omadhaun an' blinked his eyes.

"An' hasn't he any other excuse?" said the voice from behind the cloud.

Throsh tried to moisten his lips to lay the blame on the one-eyed piper, but he couldn't. All of a sudden it had come to him that he was mighty small cheese in that place. He felt as small as a cockroach

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beside the angel. There were no valets an' sword-bearers an' pipers to wait on him, an' his great tent with the five hares in silver on the flap of it was away back in Ireland where the big battle was.

"Well," said the voice from behind the clouds. "I'm going to give you a penance, Throsh. It's a penance that'll always make you remember your sins. You'll count the souls of the people that your pride made you murder, an' you'll count them again an' again till you get the exact number. If it takes you ten centuries or a thousand centuries, you'll keep on counting till you can tell the exact number of men, women, an' children who came to their deaths through your vanity. Now go ahead an' do it."

Well, when King Throsh heard the penance that was put upon him, he let out a bellow that startled three angels who were sleepin' on a little cloud near the door. If there was one thing in the world that Throsh knew nothin' about, it was figures. He couldn't add two an' two. Me father said that he couldn't count the five silver hares on the flap of his tent, an' when he heard the penance that was put upon him he went crazy entirely.

"I can't count!" he screamed, turnin' on the big angel. "I don't know one figure from another."

"But if you killed the good people, surely you can count 'em," said the angel. "Go ahead with you now."

"But I don't know how!" cried Throsh. "Sure, I never knew how many servants I had, because I couldn't tally 'em off."

"Then," said the angel, "there's plenty of time for you to learn. An' the people you killed are that happy that they won't mind the hours that pass while you're countin' them."

Well, the angel led him out to a place where he could look down, an' there before him were the souls of the men, an' the women, an' the little children that his army had killed. They were there enjoyin' themselves, playin' on golden harps an' singin' songs, because they were all honest, decent people that had said their prayers an' had attended church an' never did harm to any one, an' it was a mortal shame that Throsh's army had killed them in such quantities.

But Throsh's face was as black as a thundercloud as he looked down at them. To a man with a head for figures it would have been a mighty tough job, but to Throsh, who couldn't count six apples from one basket to another, it was the divil's own task. Sure, me father said that if Throsh asked for six soldiers an' they sent him five or seven, he couldn't tell that they had blundered.

Well, he started to talk back at the angel, but the angel trod heavily on his toe an' give him a cuff on the ear, an' then Throsh started to count. The angel gave him a little gold tablet to help him along, an' Throsh began to mumble numbers like a Galway farmer at a sheep fair. His head ached like the head of a piper after a wake, an' his brow was puckered like a washin'-board.

For six days an' six nights, me father said, he counted an' counted, then he came back to the angel who'd led him by the ear up to the judgment seat.

"Well," said the angel, "did you count 'em?"

"I did," says Throsh, holdin' his little gold tablet in his hand.

"An' how many are there?" asked the angel.

"There's one million, six hundred an' eighteen thousand, four hundred an' seventeen," said Throsh.

"You're wrong," said the angel. "Go back an' count 'em all over again."

"Am I much wrong?" said Throsh, who was cunnin' an' thought the angel might give him a tip so that he could do a bit of guesswork on it.

"I'm to tell you nothin'," said the angel.

"But if it's a matter of only one or two," said Throsh, tryin' to wheedle the information out of him.

"Do your own work," said the angel, who was a cute bird. "You've got to count them till you get them exact."

"It's the souls of the little babies that's hard to count," said Throsh. "They get under their mothers' clothes, an' under their wings."

"You should have thought of that when you were killin' them," said the angel, with a mighty cold eye on Throsh.

SO KING THROSH went back to his job, cursin' the man that invented figures. Fifteen days an' fifteen nights he spent on makin' the second count, then he came back again to the angel.

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"I make it three more than I told you the last time," said he.

"You are wrong again," said the angel.

"Am I warm?" said Throsh. "Am I warm or cold?"

"You're neither," said the angel, "an' that's not tellin' you more than you asked for."

"You're hard-hearted," said Throsh.

"I didn't kill 'em," snapped the angel. "Go back an' count again."

Well, sir, Throsh went back to his job at countin', an' the puckers on his brow grew deeper so that they looked like welts that you'd make with a blunt hatchet. An' he was mad clean through. Under his breath as he counted, he cursed Red O'Neill an' he cursed the one-eyed piper that had brought him the story about Red. He thought of all the books of arithmety that he didn't learn when he was at school, an' he cursed his own soldiers because they'd killed so many.

"If it wasn't for the little children," said he, "I believe I'd manage them."

But it was the little children that bothered King Throsh more than all the others. When he tried to count them, they ran in under the skirts of their mothers, an' Throsh damned his murderous soldiers for killin' them.

"I was a fool," said he, as he kept countin' to himself. "I was a crazy fool." Then he'd go on with his: "Ninety-one, ninety-two, ninety-three, ninety-four," till another little youngster would dodge in one side of his mother's skirt an' out the other, an' upset his count.

Well, to make a long story short, Throsh came up to the angel nine hundred an' ninety times with different tallies an' every tally was wrong. An' the figures were drivin' him crazier each day. In some counts he'd reckon that there was a million in the bunch, an' the next day he'd think there was a billion there.

An' me father says that the little children bothered him more an' more with every count that he made. Me father says that he thinks he'd have been able to count the grown-ups if he'd 'a' gone at it careful-like, but it was the little gossoons, the little teeny-weeny ones, that bothered him completely.

You can understand how hard it would be to count a bunch of skippin' youngsters like the little happy army that's just went out of here. They beat Throsh. The little babies that he butchered, that himself an' his red roarin' rapparies butchered, had his soul in torment night an' day. The way they skipped around without stoppin' for a minute made him think that they did it on purpose so as to puzzle him. The old people would stay quiet after singin' an' playin' an' flyin' around, but the little things were never quiet. Sure, there's always springtime in the legs of a child, an' the hoppin' an' the skippin' of those little kiddies drove spikes of agony into the soul of Throsh.

Me father says that when the king made the one thousandth count of that mob, an' that was thirty-seven years after the battle in which he'd been killed by Red O'Neill, Throsh went to the angel, an' he was wipin' great tears of remorse from his eyes as he walked.

"I'd sooner be in hell," said he. "I'd sooner go to hell than do this work."

Well, when he said that the angel let out a big roar of laughter an' it got Throsh mad.

"You're a queer one," says he to Throsh.

"How?" said Throsh. "I'm askin' to go to hell because I think it'd be less sufferin'!"

"Why," says the angel, "you big omadhaun, you're in hell!"

"In hell?" roared Throsh.

"Sure," said the angel. "It's hell you're in. Every man," said the angel, pointin' his finger at the nose of the king, "makes his own hell when he's on earth, an' it's yourself that made a mighty good one. It's a fine one," says he, "an' you'll be a long while gettin' through with it. Go back to your job, now, because we don't allow any loafin' on the premises."

So King Throsh went back to his job of countin' the men, women, an' children that his army an' himself murdered. An' they say that he's there now, countin' an' figurin' an' cryin' with temper because the little gossoons won't keep still in the sunshine, an' it's always sunshine there.

Me father says that he'll never be able to count them because his counts are gettin' worse each day. But he's got to stick at it because that's the penance that was put upon him. There's a hill up beyond Tim Leary's place right at the back at the farm where me father lived at Rathdown, an' the top of the hill is so high that of a clear night when there's no wind blowin', you can hear King Throsh countin'.

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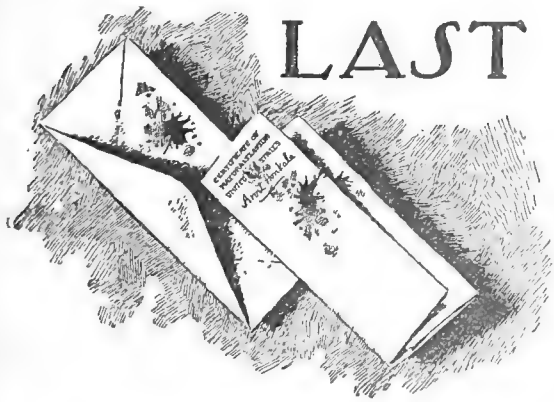
It's a fact. Me father heard him once an' I heard me father tell the blessed Father Cassidy all about it. He said that he walked up there one night when it was that still that you could hear the little stars in the Milky Way rubbin' against each other, an' he heard King Throsh countin' as plain as if he was at his elbow. Me father heard the king's words. Throsh was chantin': "One thousand an' one, one thousand an' two, one thousand an' three," then, all of a sudden, he let out a mouthful of curses an' me father knew that one of the little children had slipped under the white gown of its mother an' upset Throsh's count.

An', faith, I think it was a mighty good penance to put on the old divil of a murderin' king. Don't you? What right had he to murder a million people just because another king had a bigger sword-arm than him? Why didn't he go out an' fight it out alone with Red O'Neill without murderin' an' pillagin' an' killin' decent people who had nothin' at all to do with his quarrel?

Well, that's all my story, an' I must leave you. I've got three Italians sweepin' floors for me here, an' unless I'm right on their heels, they'll do nothin'. It's a day when you can't get good help. They'll come to you tellin' you that they're willin' to work their finger-nails off, but you've got to chase 'em 'round like the devil chased Micky Conlin for the penny that Mick borrowed off him at the Fair of Leshbin.



LAST PAPERS

by C. L. Gilman

"I AM now American citizen, now."

The wind which blew the snow along the frozen contortions of the Moose Ear River had come straight from Hudson's Bay; the tamaracks were crackling with frost; the pipe he held in his teeth was frozen past drawing, but "Hip-Shot Tommy" Smith unmittened before extending his hand.

"Congratulations, Mr. Honkala," he said.

Then, smiling down from his lank height upon the stocky, hard-knit Finlander who faced him, he asked—

"How does it feel, Arvit, to carry all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a voter in this free and glorious country?"

The Finn's face darkened to the half-sad, half-sullen mask of his race.

"It is hard business to be citizen," he answered. "I do not very well understand all things. But this country does not seem to be so free. You, who should be one of the people, are servant to rich men to keep poor men from shooting meat when they need it——"

"Enforcing the laws of our country, Arvit, which we might have made if we'd 'tended to our business and which we may unmake if we want to—and can."

"Am I free citizen, when you are gamewarden to put me in jail when I kill a moose? But now I am citizen I can better help make this, our country, free by the social revolution. And 'glorious country'—say, why is 'In God We Trust' on dollar? Is it that the dollar is the American god?"

Many men might have laughed at this, but not Hip-Shot. He took other men seriously and—particularly after they had seen him shoot—other men did the same by him. The little Finn—he could have broken Smith with his bare hands for all the warden's size—was somewhat of his making.

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With cautious deference he had helped expand the young homesteader's night-school English. He even had carefully concealed designs for making him more of an American than could any mere court of naturalization. So he answered carefully:

"No, it is not that we make the dollar our god. Before there was any United States, when the people first tried to be free, a lot of poor farmers—sort of homesteaders—down in Massachusetts had to fight trained soldiers for their freedom. They figured that they didn't stand any more show than a lot of rabbits, unless God thought they ought to be free and was on their side. They believed He was. So they put 'In God We Trust' on their battle-flag and went to it. They won. So we keep 'In God We Trust' on our dollar, where we all hope to see it often, to remind us that what we have now cost us more than money."

Relief lightened Honkala's face. The gibe, he had read it in *The Finnish Socialist*, had hurt his pride as a citizen.

"I thank you," he said, "only, war is wrong. When the social revolution has come there will be no more war; poor men will not kill other poor men so that rich men may be richer—like in Europen now. I am American citizen, now, and must do like the President tells me. I am glad that he has told me not to meddle in the fighting in Europen, and I shall not meddle."

Tommy Smith was dressed for travel. Which means he had on his Summer clothes, was packing his mackinaw, and depended on moving fast to keep warm. Also he rather looked to find a letter waiting for him, out at the rail—a girl's letter.

"Fine," he said.

"And," continued the Finn, keen for his fill of talk before settling down to the long solitude of his lonely clearing, "so long as we do not meddle with them, they can not make war with us. Is it not so?"

"Let's hope so, anyhow."

"No, I shall not meddle. See, I am keeping laws already, now I am citizen. I am shooting only partridge; I have only my .22 rifle. That is keeping laws?"

"Sure and—" as he swung his rifle across his arm for the start—"so-long."

"So-long," responded the Finn, and hoisted his pack-sack with its lumpy cargo of groceries to his shoulders.

AS HE trudged along up the river the little homesteader's mind was busy with many things, so he was a serious and studious man who read works on socialism to fortify his principles and such light literature as "The Origin of the Species" to perfect his English, during the long northwoods evenings.

No Anglo-Saxon can more than guess what goes on in the Finnish mind, that brooding, sensitive mind with its artist strain of idealism and its queer, Oriental twist. But any backwoods mossback will tell that Finns do think, that it's a habit with all of them, and a vice which sets some so crazy that they break loose with a knife toward the end of the heavy snows.

When Honkala had walked down river, two days before, to take the train, he had been an alien with only first papers. Now, after that brusque ceremony in the court-room at Duluth, he was a citizen. All this country, so bleak, so sadly beautiful, so like his homeland, was his. The papers tucked into his inside pocket proved it. He was a citizen and a man, by token of the rifle trailing at his side, the rifle which he might never have carried in Finland save as the conscript of an alien despotism.

He was going to be a good citizen; he was resolved on that. He had come to take toll of this strange, foreign country. First as a toiler in the iron mines, then as a swamper in a logging-camp, he had taken toll. Then, when he learned that by becoming a citizen he could exact one hundred and sixty acres of land for his own, citizenship—and its profits—had become his goal. Now he was a citizen. Already he had entered upon his homestead. He had a log cabin built, three acres hewn out of the forest, a crop of potatoes grown between the rocks. In time, now he was a citizen, all this would be his beyond question.

Then, maybe, Hilma—she who washed dishes in a restaurant in Virginia and spoke English as slangily as an American born—might consent to share it with him. But that must wait until he had money. His last dollar he had broken to pay for his ticket home. A dollar with "In God We Trust" stamped on it.

He was glad he knew now what that motto meant. It stood for fighting. Fighting was bad—that is, unless some one interfered between a man and his girl. Then—his eyes glinted and a fresh scar on his cheek

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glowed—then a man took his knife and cut until the other man could no longer stand and slash back.

But fighting, even for a country, was better than making a god of money.

Woods-walking is the most mechanical thing in the world. Honkala swung along on the ice, cut across the bends, noted mechanically where three deer had crossed the river with five wolves in close pursuit—one of the deer had slipped on the glare ice under the snow and fallen. And he thought on without interruption.

Those men, long ago, in a state—Smith had explained to him what a state was—whose name he was afraid to try to pronounce and whose location was doubtful, had fought to get this country. It was wrong, of course, for them to fight, but he could not exactly see how they could have gotten the country away from those other men without fighting. It would be some fighter who'd get that quarter-section away from him, Arvit Honkala. So they had fought for the country. Well, he would do better than that, he would give it the social revolution. He was a citizen now, had been for a whole day, and could work for it better.

And Smith was a citizen, too, but he had no "papers." When he first broached the subject of "second papers" to Smith he had been shocked to learn that that good-natured despot had none.

"Your father then?" he had said. "You were born in this country?"

And there had been a touch of superiority in Smith's answer which rankled yet as he replied:

"No, not my father nor my father's father or any of our folks. There's not a set of 'papers' in my whole family tree. We were here before the United States, came over in 1647 and helped make 'em. We used guns and axes and plows and politics. We fought the Indians and the French and the English and the weather and the wilderness and each other to make this a nice, safe place for you fellows to come to."

"Always fighting and killing and proud of it," thought Honkala. "We new Americans, we will not fight; we will change things to socialism. If we have to, we will kill off these folks who don't want it, but we will have the social revolution, and no rich men and no game laws and no war."

Above all, no war, resolved Honkala. And he so thought of war as he walked and of how men were battling in Europe; of dead men and sacked cities and blood. And his lips curled away from his teeth as he thought, for he was of a breed as bloodthirsty as it is sentimental.

He had almost killed his man—knife to knife. He would have killed him if the police, uniformed agents of tyranny, had not interfered. Always men in uniform holding down and oppressing men out of it—game-wardens, policemen and soldiers.

Honkala's back stiffened. He half raised his little rifle. There were soldiers now, a file of them, advancing across the muskeg.

Then he laughed at himself. They were not soldiers, but rich men, sports from the city, come to kill the deer and moose which ought to belong to the poor settler. The soldier suggestion had been startling, at first. They were all five dressed alike, in the red mackinaw coats and caps which modern deer-slayers must needs wear to protect themselves from each other. Each was bent under the pack-sack, that universal luggage-carrier of the North. By chance all had their rifles at the shoulder and were picking their way in single file.

"Hullo there, sport," hailed the file-leader. "Say, are we in Canada yet or is this still U. S. A.?"

"This is in Minnesota," answered Honkala. "This is the Moose Ear River."

"Pay up that five, Hank," roared the file-closer, a slim man with a thick voice. "You and your map and your dinky compass making out we were headed west for Genozhe Creek!"

From this, and from other remarks spoken half to and half at him, Honkala gathered that these five men had missed connections with their guide and were attempting to find their way across country to a hunting-camp at the head of Buckahtay Lake. They got out their map, consulted their compasses and wrangled, with occasional appeals to him, regarding their present whereabouts and future course.

They were boisterous, with the heavy boyishness of middle age let loose for a frolic in the woods. For capitalists, and such he judged them to be from the fineness of their outfit and the splendor of their new rifles, he found them surprisingly human.

Perhaps he could show them the way.

Well, his way lay with theirs as far as a Moose Ear Lake portage. There, they

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must cross the outlet and take to the north shore while his course turned to the southeast. They'd see when they got there if they could make on without him.

AS CITY men will, they asked questions, and, as backwoodsmen the world over, once the ice is broken, Honkala answered them, glad to break the long silence of the woods-dweller on any terms.

He told them his name and his business. He told them of his plans, his homestead and his new citizenship. Then he remembered that it is the humble part to always answer and never ask.

"And who are you?" Then, by way of a jest of his own, "At first I think you are soldiers, you are so dressed alike."

Dr. Archibald Morton is a famous surgeon. He was, until that day, equally famous as a kidder. His wit was in demand whenever and wherever speeches are made. Its punch lay in his quickness to catch a cue. He caught this.

"You," he said with a solemnity which prepared his companions for the laugh to come, "are a Finlander, are you not?"

"I was."

"The freedom of Finland, as you doubtless know, depends upon a German victory in the war now in progress in Europe. True the Czar has promised this also, but the Czar has promised before. Has he kept his promises? He has not. Neither will he keep this promise. But the Kaiser will keep his. Listen. Tell no one. We are soldiers. Soldiers of the Fatherland, fighting for the Kaiser, for the Kaiser whose victory means the liberty of Finland.

"No, we are not at war with the United States. The day for that will come—after Germany has conquered its European enemies and swept England from the seas. Listen well. You are about to be trusted with a great secret: The deer-hunting season opens tomorrow. Thousands of armed men are flocking into the woods. They look like hunters; no one is surprised because they are gathering here, so close to the Canadian border.

"North of us, only forty-five miles, runs a railroad over which England is sending thousands of savage East Indian warriors to fight against the Fatherland. Are we German-Americans—there are thousands of us in Minnesota and Wisconsin—to sit idly by while these barbarians are sent against our country? No. We are gathering here at the border. Is it to hunt the deer?

"No—it is to strike a blow for Germany. We shall break that railroad. Who knows, maybe we shall strike deeper—at Winnipeg, where millions of bushels of wheat are gathered to feed the English, whom may *Gott* punish. You, a Finlander, can help Germany free Finland by guiding us to the camp where we are to take command of all those gathered for this great purpose."

Dr. Morton turned, with upraised hand, just in time to check the laughter of his friends at this gorgeous jest.

"Is this not so, my comrades?" he abjured them.

"But—but," faltered Honkala, "Mr. Wilson, our President, has made a law that no American citizen shall meddle in this war—and I am now American citizen."

"So are we all American citizens." Four of them were also Sons of the Revolution. The doctor was an unreconstructed Confederate as well. "Citizens, by a scrap of paper. But we are Germans—and you are a Finn. We owe our duty first to our own countries. We must think and act first for them."

"But this would make the United States into the war, and many men will be killed," objected Honkala.

"You have a deep mind, a sagacious mind, my friend," responded the doctor. "You have hit upon our real purpose. This will throw the United States into the war, on the side of Germany—and Finland. Think some more. It will bring sixteen million fighting men to our side. Canada will never wait for explanations. Canadian troops will be burning and killing on this side of the border five hours after we have struck our first blow. The United States, cowardly as it is, will have no chance but to fight—and on our side."

They had reached the outlet of Moose Ear Lake, half a mile of surging rapids which never freeze over and which can be crossed only at one point, by a single footlog. Honkala advanced his last argument.

"But there are many in our country who are not Finlanders or Germans; they would have to fight, too, and their women and the little children would feel bad."

"Yah, those blamed Yankees, what do we care about them so long as they can be made to fight for us?"

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"One of them is my good friend."

It was Smith of whom the little Finlander thought. Smith, who was armed with a real rifle, who always knew what to do and how to do it; Smith who wore the nickeled badge of authority, who had the power of the law back of him. If Smith were here, he would make these men stop before they tricked his country into the war.

What could he, Honkala, a citizen of yesterday, do? He had argued as best he could; there was no bright shield of authority pinned to his faded mackinaw. He was one man, with a boy's gun, against five men armed with high-power rifles. He would go no farther with them. As soon as they were gone he would run and tell Smith. There might yet be time.

He voiced only his refusal to go farther. He took the dollar tendered for his guidance thus far, for he was a poor man and the silver disk felt good in his palm. He glanced dully at it. The motto between the wings of the eagle stared at him:

"In God We Trust."

These older Americans, Smith's fathers, had been outnumbered and ill-armed, but they had put their trust in God—and fought.

A sudden wsithing of his shoulders shed Honkala's packsack. A sudden jump set him at the farther end of the foot-log. He wheeled and menaced them with his little rifle.

"Get back! The President—you shall not make my country in this war—I am American citizen. Get out!"

A boy's rifle. Back of it a first class fighting man with a red knife-scar blazing on his cheek snarling defiance in an unfamiliar tongue. Jest turned earnest.

Savagery is less than skin deep when strange men face each other across the abyss of race with arms in their hands.

IT WAS a minister of the gospel who whipped his rifle to his shoulder and sent a 9-mm. bullet whistling past Honkala's head.

It was a professor of chemistry who fell, stunned by the impact of a .22-short between his eyes.

A corporation attorney sat down to nurse a punctured leg.

A wholesale druggist blew Honkala's hip to bits with a bullet which would never pass muster under the Geneva convention.

One to four stood the odds. One was in mistaken but deadly earnest, four had seen, they thought, their dead. As a winged partridge burrows into the fallen leaves, so Honkala lurched behind the upturned roots of the foot-log.

Already he had taken enough to kill a man, but—ask any northwoodsman—a Finn when fighting combines the vitality of a porcupine with the ferocity of a rabid wolf.

Honkala was down, but his rifle was up. Sixteen shots remained to him, sixteen puny pellets, scarcely to be trusted to kill a swamp rabbit. Through the roots above him crashed bullets designed for killing moose.

His was the short end of the fight. But a moment remained before the wound in his hip would finish him.

Shrieking inarticulate defiance, he seized his breastwork with his left hand and drew himself upright.

"In God We Trust!" he yelled—and emptied his magazine.

The two last bullets found him standing.

His clouding eyes saw the backs of his enemies, those two of them who still could run.

Bit by bit Tommy Smith pieced out the story from the hysterical fugitives who met him coming up the river and led him back to the outlet with its wounded—and its dead.

Arvit Honkala was dead beyond a doubt. His body, what the umbrella-point spitzers had left of it, still blocked the foot-log he had fought to keep. As a brave man's should, it had fallen forward as the life went out.

Tommy Smith gathered up some torn and bloody papers which had spilled from the dead man's mackinaw—the papers which declared Arvit Honkala an American citizen.

Tommy Smith sobbed out oath after oath; his voice shook with rage and sorrow. But the rifle leveled from his hip was steady.

"You damned comedians are under arrest," he said.

"But we, but I," protested the doctor, "was just stringing, just kidding, that crazy foreigner, and he——"

"Died for his country," said Smith.

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THE STORY OF WILLIAM HYDE

A FOUR PART STORY — PART III.

By Patrick and Terence Casey

SYNOPSIS—*William Hyde*, his green parrot straddling his shoulder, escapes from an angry Hawaiian mob and is hauled over a ship's rail and into the forcastle by *Kildare*, one of the crew, along with *Fitzhamon* who has also fled the isle for another reason. *Hyde*, a gentleman born, explains that he was taking money from the natives with a "shell-and-pea" game, that he might accomplish the one thing he lives for—to return to Borneo and gain (along with something else) the Green, Green God, a treasure of which both the others have heard. *Hyde* then hints at a race of Tartars who guard the Jallan Batoe, an extinct volcano in the heart of Borneo, the subject of rumors throughout the South Seas. When *Fitzhamon* doubts that *Hyde* has actually seen the Green, Green God, the latter hammers him insensible, and, his experiences flooding back on him, is swept into telling his story to *Kildare:*

While hunting orchids (tells *Hyde*) I came upon this Jallan Batoe. A golden-skinned people live there—a leftover from a raid of the famous Genghis Khan; live in dwellings hollowed from huge stones that "sing" when they cool at night from the sun's heat. Their tradition is that one day a descendant of Genghis Khan, his "man-child," with blue eyes and red beard, like the old Tartar emperor's own, would come—either to lead or destroy them. They looked into my blue eyes, marveled at my red beard, then led me to their *dobo* to make me king. There I saw the Green, Green God—a parrot carved from a single emerald. One of these people I loved—my *Golden Feather of Flame.* One of them, *Lip-Plak-Tengga*, High Priestess, seemed to know I was only a white man. She loved me, but a fear of her grew up in me.

From my throne I learned that these Poonan believed I was about to destroy them—kill all because of a sin committed against Genghis Khan by their ancestors. The High Priestess begged first for them, then for her own life. Drunk with realization of my power, I threw her aside. I wanted only my *Golden Feather of Flame* and the Green, Green God. And in their terror the Poonan cried to their queen to save them.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHAT MANNER HYDE FULFILLED THE SENDING OF THE SWORD

NOW there was that in the scream of all those people (Hyde pursued), that calling upon their lovely Queen to save them which shocked me, swiftly and sweepingly, out of my madness. I stood up, my right arm still holding aloft the Menacing *Mandau* as if suddenly that arm had been turned to stone, my whole frame turned to stone with a kind of fear.

Had I overstepped my power in leaping upon that Sublime Throne, shouting out and waving that sword so threateningly? I did not know. But I stood there in a suspense unspeakable, icing through and through to the very marrow of my bones with that great fear.

And then, with a swishing sound which shattered that suspense, from the right-hand sacristy the tapestries of rare feathers and gold and silver embroideries were brushed aside, and out upon the dais before me ran, impetuously ran, my own beautiful Golden Feather of Flame!

The *Mandau* of Genghis Khan fell to my side. My eyes, sick with love and longing, swam in a dizzy mist, my brains eddied in their brain-pan, and quick as the beat of frenzied tom-toms throbbed my heart. I stood and looked, marveled and thrilled in a rioting of the senses.

Yet that wondrous Marshal Queen was not garbed in a colorful orchid gown like the Priestesses, nor even in rich feathers like the Golden Women. Hers was a garb of sorrow, a garb of despair. But not at all a queenly garb of sorrow and despair. Hers was only a poor, plain, scanty garb, the garb of one humiliated and abashed—a slave's garb!

A meager skirt of loose *cogon* grass, it was; a skirt of grass such as is worn by the brown maidens of Tahiti. From a string about her slim waist, that skirt draped down to a point shortly above the dimpling roundness of her knees. For the rest, she was as nude as Aphrodite arising from the

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sea; but, just as with Aphrodite, her nudity seemed only to enhance her beauty the more, showing off the superb golden mold of her to the utter eclipse of the beauty of all the women I ever have seen.

A loosened mass was her hair, a loosened mass that fell about her unclad lovely form in thick long filaments that were streams of sunrays, and a loosened mass that veiled, as tenderly as an autumnal foliage, the breasts of her that were low and firm, but luxuriant as ripe pomegranates.

Her head bowed under that disheveled weight of gold, her arms drooping at her sides, she came toward the throne. A yard before that throne, she halted. She raised her head. She looked up. She looked up at me with eyes that were large and dewy, eyes that were beseeching, eyes that implored. Then, in utter abasement, she cast herself upon her knees before me and lifted up supplicating arms.

"O Man-Child of Genghis, the Great and Good!" she faltered breathlessly. "O *Toewan Orlok Raj* of all the Poonan! Please, please, I entreat you, condescend to hear my pitiful prayer. I beg you to be merciful. But I beg mercy not for myself. I beg mercy for my people, the Poonan.

"O Man-Child, graciously hear me. It was not these poor people who disobeyed the Sending of the Sword. It was their ancestors, now long dead and buried. And not the men of those ancestors; it was the women of those ancestors who were to blame.

"It was the women of the Poonan who first advised that we deny all allegiance to Genghis Khan, thy forefather and mine. It was the women of the Poonan who killed the few remaining horses of the Poonan so that the men could not leave the Jallan Batoe and fight their way back to the sea and the Great Genghis. *Arrêt* It was those very women of the Poonan who, for seven hundred years, have kept secret this place from the Khans of Tartary. The mothers of all my people did that—their mothers and mine.

"But mine were the greatest sinners. Mine were the *Orlok Radenajos*. Mine were the women who held all the Poonan under their sway. Mine and mine alone kept the Poonan away from all fealty to Tartary and the issue of Genghis Khan. On them is all the blame for that sin of disobedience! On them, *ahê*, and on me, their daughter!

"O Man-Child of the Good Genghis, this and this only do I crave of thee! Let my people live and let me die in atonement for that sin. Spare, O *Toewan Raj*, spare my people. Kill only me for the sin of the Poonan! I am ready, Great Lord. My neck is bared. Bring down the *Mandau* of Genghis Khan and let my head be taken from my shoulders. My spirit is weak; with that sword, I would kill myself; but I am afraid, afraid! I pray thee, O Lord of all the Tartars; bring down that sword, I pray thee! I am the Sacrifice! Kill me for the redemption of my people!"

And, even as she pleaded, she bent her forehead down to the curve of the throne and, with a quick movement of both hands, threw her hair away from her ivory-white neck so that the loose, bright mass sprayed a shower of molten gold over my shreds of boots.

Her neck was bared then, surely enough, from the glorious head of her, down to her fair, sweet, drooping shoulders. Her neck was bared for the sacrifice. And she was waiting for me to bring down that great ugly sword, waiting for me to cut off her beautiful head.

But even had I the heartless wish to comply with her plea, I could not have brought down that sword, much less lifted it. My hand was cold on that sword—nerveless.

I was face to face with the one thing of all things I never had expected. It was the Great Unexpected. It shocked me. It shocked me as a stroke of paralysis would have shocked me, paralyzing my sword-arm, my whole frame, every part of me save my brains.

But my brains! They sputtered and fumed with thoughts that were the searing fires of an accusing conscience. I had thought she would be filled with envy and hate at my usurpation of her crown. I had thought I knew women! Ah, me! Women and women I had met and known; but never—never in all my life—had I met one woman such as she.

Offer herself as a sacrifice! Beg to die for the sin of all! Give up crown, give up beauty, give all life itself, for the sake of her subjects! It was sublime. It was altogether too sublime for me in nobility of character, greatness of heart.

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I felt suddenly inferior, inexpressibly shamed. According to my own selfish standards I had judged her; and hers were far loftier standards. In my own mind I had given her a rôle to play, a rôle which would have been mine, I know, under similar circumstances. And she had answered; she had bowed herself before me; she answered in the rôle of a martyr, the glorious rôle of a saint!

I was sickened with myself—sickened to the soul. Who was I, I thought, to be standing up there above all those terrified Poonan, waving that sword like some dread deity, some horrible, merciless god? Who was I to be standing up there, while she, who was far nobler than I, must kneel at my feet like a slave, lift up supplicating arms to me, and now wait with bowed head for me to rob her of all her beautiful life?

The infamousness of it all set me aflame with self-reproach and anger. I was incensed at myself, furious. I would show her what I—I whom the Poonan believed was the Man-Child of Genghis Khan—I would show her what *I* thought of that Sending of the Sword! I would show all those terrified Poonan what their sin amounted to in the face of such an offer of sacrifice as that of their heavenly Queen! I would show them that that sin was nothing to me now—nothing at all, even to the Man-Child!

I lifted up that heavy bejeweled sword. Down I brought that sword across my knee. With an angry surge of strength, one violent smash across my uplifted knee, I broke that massive blade into two pieces!

Upon that lofty Nine-Times-Nine Throne I stood up thereat to my over-six-feet. I stood up like a man inspired. With the ivory-and-jewel-hilted half of blade in one hand, the curved, gold-backed tip in the other, I raised my arms above my head in a commanding gesture.

"People of the Poonan!" I cried out in a voice that was loud in all that hush. "I have broken the sword. Across my knee in two pieces I have broken the sword. The sword threatens you no longer. That menace to the Poonan for seven hundred years is now a shattered, useless thing!

"I am the Man-Child Who Was To Come, and I have broken the Menacing *Mandau* of Genghis Khan. The Sending of the Sword is fulfilled. Because your noble Queen begged to die in order to save you, I have forgiven you the Sin of Disobedience. My heart has been touched. Because of that offer of sacrifice of your glorious Queen, I have absolved you from the reckoning!

"Fear no more. The period of waiting and terror is at an end. No more does the Command of Death hang over you. Live, O Poonan, and be at peace. Live, O beautiful *Orlok Radenajo*, and be happy. The Sending of the Sword is fulfilled. I say that, who am the Man-Child of Genghis Khan. The Sending of the Sword is fulfilled!"

And I cast the two parts of that broken sword down beside the watching, crouching High Priestess. There was a metallic ring, loud as the echoes of my voice in all that stillness; then, on the back of it, shattering completely that stillness, a terrific thunder of sound. The Poonan beyond and below that white balustrade had leaped, in an eye-wink, to their feet. The golden throats of the women were throbbing in a happy pæan of rejoicing; the tom-toms and whistles, flutes and conches of the stream of men along the walls were clamoring exultantly. All, all were voicing their joy and gratitude at their deliverance from death.

CHAPTER XVIII

RELATES HOW HYDE WON ETERNALLY THE MARSHAL QUEEN, AND THEN LOOKED BACK OVER HIS SHOULDER

BUT the beautiful *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* at my feet, did not move. Despite all that exultant clamor, she still knelt in the same heartrending attitude, her forehead bent upon the throne, her glorious hair cascading over my shreds of boots, her neck bared for death.

Tears of penitence and a great love swimming across my eyes, I looked down at that fair, delicate curve of neck, glinting up at me with its subtle powdering of gold. I was waiting, with a kind of anxious, happy anticipation, for her to raise her superb head, her beautiful eyes to me—to me who once had been the destroyer, but who now, through the nobility of her example, was the savior.

But as a long moment passed and still she did not move, with a chilling of heart, a sudden dread smote me. She had admitted,

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with simple bravery, that she was afraid. Perhaps, I thought, from fear of the death she thoroughly had expected, there against that throne at my feet, she had swooned away!

I leaped down. I leaped down off that throne, and at my action, as at the sound of a communion-bell, the exultant clamor of all those Poonan stilled into a breathless hush. But I gave no heed to them. I bent over that purest and noblest of women.

"Do not fear, do not weep, O Golden Feather of Flame!" I breathed huskily in Poonan into one tiny transparent ear. "For your sake, for you alone, I have forgiven all the Poonan. I have forgiven all the Poonan because you asked that of me, because I can refuse you nothing! For I love you, Golden Feather of Flame! And cut off your head—I could never cut off your head! Not even one tiny sun-ray of hair on your beautiful head! I—I love you too much!"

A tremulous movement, for all the world as if suddenly she were awakening, seemed to sweep at my words through her sweet form.

"Ah, look up, look up at me!" I stammered. "Look up into my eyes. There is love there, Golden Feather of Flame. Love for you. I love you, O glorious Queen; yes, I do love you!"

Quite suddenly she looked up at me through her golden skein of hair, her face, beneath, rosy as the dawn.

"But," her lips quivered, "but you—you are the Man-Child of Genghis Khan, the *Toewan Orlok Raj* of all the Poonan——"

"*Ahél*" I agreed quickly; then impulsively: "And you, Golden Feather of Flame—say but the word, and you shall be forever the *Toewan Orlok Radenajo* of all the Poonan and—and my Queen! For I love you, *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*; I love you—love you—love you!"

Her curving silky brushes of lashes modestly shaded her greenish downcast eyes, and then, quite as suddenly as she had looked up, just so suddenly did she bow her glowing face before the ardor, the rapture of my gaze.

For I was aflame now with that burning desire for her. I bent close to her golden form. With an awed intake of breath, bodily I lifted her to her little arched feet. She seemed as light in my arms as a gossamer of down.

I held her in my arms. The warm softness of her body, the silky smoothness of her golden-ivory skin, but above and beyond all, the ineffable sweet nearness of her, intoxicated me like some wine of the gods. I held her close.

"I do love you, Golden Feather of Flame!" I whispered. "I want you. I dearly want you to be my bride! Lift up your lips, my Queen—lips that are like red petals—that I may kiss them!"

The Poonan had become strangely still, as I said, watching me in a sort of breathless hush. Well now, like an echo of my voice, softly and almost reverently from a thousand throats, swept a whisper from those watching Poonan:

"He is going to kiss her! The Man-Child is going to kiss *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*! Look! He bends his head to kiss her!"

And so I *had* bent my head, truly enough, for my eyes were on those of the wondrous woman in my arms. Those eyes of hers entranced me. They were set with tears. those eyes, wet and lustrous with tears, like two resplendent turquoises. And her voice, low and sweet, seemed liquid with tears.

"But I am not worthy of thee, O Man-Child!" she whispered from my shoulder. "I am not worthy, though—though I do love thee! It was that first night—when I touched your beard, I think—when I first looked into your eyes!"

As if my huge body were some form of stringed instrument through which her whisper had played, I thrilled through and through, then, in a transport of joy, of love. She not worthy of me—not worthy of William Hyde!

With soft, caressing movements, I released her lovely head from the close embrace of my shoulder, brushed aside her sun-rays of hair, tenderly tilted up her delicate chin and lowered my lips toward her lips—lips that were smiling up at me, now, like a budding red, red rose.

And then! A hand tugged at my left arm, as if to draw me away; a voice shrilled into my ear as though to stop me!

"Do not kiss her, do not kiss her! Oh, kiss not her, Great Man-Child; kiss me, only me! I love you, *Raj*! I love you more than *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* loves you! No one, no one on earth, loves you so much as I!"

Like a cat, she clutched at my arm, that

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High Priestess, and tried to swing me about, big man though I am. I did not see her face; my eyes were on Golden Feather of Flame's eyes and the hearts of both of us throbbed in our eyes, bewitching us, enchanting us, drawing us together in a fulness of love. I did not see *Lip-Plak-Tengga's* face, I say, but I knew from the shrill of her voice that she was beside herself with envy and despair. She wanted to stop me from kissing my beloved; but my eyes were on my beloved's and nothing could stop me.

I flung my left arm free. With that freed left arm, I shoved the High Priestess aside. I shoved her aside quite brutally, I suppose; but really I was hardly conscious of her—hardly conscious that she had spoken and acted. All I knew was that my lovely loved one was warm and close in my arms, that my eyes were on hers and that her rosebud lips were turned temptingly up to me—the willing gift of love!

"Mine, mine—all, all mine!" I whispered, and my hot lips touched those of the Golden Queen.

HER lips were as soft as roses, as warm as life itself, as moistly sweet as honey, and as fragrant as the flowers of some sweet dream with that delicious breath of hers. I drank of them as of some heady, delirious wine.

She sighed languorously, luxuriously. Then, ardently, her lips answered mine; her arms circled 'round my neck like golden coils of seduction; and her velvety body nestled close and cozily within my arms, against my bare chest.

Thus, on that lofty dais before all those Poonan, we stood, swaying slightly, our hearts tumultuously throbbing against each other in ecstatic unison, our lips clinging rapturously in that first kiss. We took no note of the passage of time; we took no note of the eyes of all those Poonan—they might as well never have been there. We were together, we two souls, and there was no one else at all upon the whirling earth. We clung together in an ecstasy sublime.

It was the holiest moment of my life.

But all things must come to an end, and so even with that rapt embrace—though how long later it was, I know not. But of a sudden, breaking through the enravishing spell of that embrace, a hand once again tightened upon my left arm, and once again the voice of *Lip-Plak-Tengga*, calm and icy now, spoke into my ear:

"You have kissed her. Before all the Poonan, you have kissed her. And the Poonan marriage ceremony consists only of a kiss!

"Ah, you did not know that, you fool!" as I started involuntarily. "But you would not kiss me, even though I begged you, and so you are well served. *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* is your bride. You have kissed her before us all. Your bride she is and your queen she must become. But you will have your regrets, O Man-Child. You shall regret many, many times—you fool!"

I had started involuntarily, but for a fact, indeed; for there was that in the High Priestess' words, scornful though those words were, which told me of a great happiness. I trembled all over with that happiness. For I knew for a surety now, from the very bitterness of *Lip-Plak-Tengga's* words, that that first kiss of Golden Feather of Flame was no passing bit of paradise. Rather, it was the precious key which had opened to Golden Feather of Flame and me the gates of a paradise on earth, an enchanted eternal paradise! We were married by that kiss, absolutely, irrevocably.

I felt awed. I looked back over the various steps that had led up to my marriage and I seemed to see myself acting like a man inspired. I saw myself refusing *Lip-Plak-Tengga's* beseechings that I kiss her. I lived again that holiest moment of my life when I kissed my lovely bride, Golden Feather of Flame.

I must have been inspired! My wildest fancy never could have conceived that the Poonan held the first kiss sacred. A kiss the whole ceremony of marriage! That was too primitive a rite, too lacking in ceremonies and solemn services, for a civilized mind, without some foreknowledge, to imagine.

And yet, when you consider it, a first kiss—to kiss and be kissed by one you love and who loves you—that is a holy thing. It partakes of the nature of a sacrament. It is a thing of Heaven, not of earth. It is the spiritual essence of the ceremony of marriage. Even with us white men, it is a spiritual part, if not the very essence, of our ceremony of marriage. There is the kiss at the altar. After the words of consent,

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the blessing, the gold band that binds, comes, even with us, the kiss at the altar—that spiritual rite of our ritual of marriage.

But only a very primitive, simple-hearted people could feel the beautiful simplicity of a kiss alone so strongly as to make that kiss the whole, complete, absolute ceremony of marriage. And the Poonan were a people simple-hearted and primitive. So they had made a sacrament of Heaven of the first kiss.

In all sincerity and love and humbleness, I had kissed her whom I loved. With that kiss, therefore, I had married her. I was a fool, no doubt, just as *Lip-Plak-Tengga* called me, just as I always have been; but oh, at that time, what a happy, happy fool!

Sounded in my enraptured ears then, it seemed, the very voice of my own happiness. Rang through the vast cavern of the Stone *Dobo*, the joyous treble of bamboo flutes and *cogon* whistles, the blissful blare of horn conches, the erratic exultant beat of tom-toms, and the music of countless voices, singing in glorification:

"Ten thousand years of life to the Man-Child of Genghis Khan, the *Toewan Orlok Raj* of all the Poonan! And ten thousand years of life to *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*, his bride and *Toewan Orlok Radenajo!*"

I understood then. The Poonan were signifying not only their consent, but their felicity at our marriage. Gladly, with the blessing of a long life, they were giving their queen to me! Now in truth was she my beautiful bride, my Golden Queen!

Like a man crazed with happiness, I picked up that wondrous woman who was mine, and with her like a rosy baby in my arms, leaped once again upon the swell of that Nine-Times-Nine Throne. I set her down upon her little pink toes.

Then, with an action significant of our marriage-band and of our lordly estate, I gently put one arm about her soft shoulders and draped that Robe of Holies, so heavy upon my shoulders, about her lovely form, thus holding her under it and close to me as my most precious possession. My chest bulging with pride, I turned thereat and faced all the Poonan.

But as I did, and the Poonan all bowed down and up, and down and up again, and their music swelled into a very thunder of glorification, of a sudden, beneath the *kliau* of the Green, Green God, my eyes caught a movement upon the part of the High Priestess, *Lip-Plak-Tengga*.

Whether from physical weakness or the weakness induced by overmastering rage, *Lip-Plak-Tengga* had slumped down, a moment before, beneath the *kliad* of the Green, Green God. Yet, at this very moment she was raising herself, in her now torn and bruised red orchid gown, from the white stone flooring. Her face was paled to a sickly saffron. Her eyes were uplifted to the face of my Golden Feather of Flame. And her eyes were terrible eyes. They were terrible with hate.

I watched her with a subtle sense of fear. She got to her knees and then, like a stealthy cat, came crawling on all-fours toward the throne. But suddenly, as if seized with a sharp spasm of weakness, she halted; her breath seemed to come with effort, and her breasts rose and fell convulsively.

She clutched with both hands at her breasts. She clutched at her breasts and at that action I saw, in her right hand, a broken half of the *Mandau* of Genghis Khan!

Quickly, there on the throne, I stepped before *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*. And there seemed a need for me to step thus protectingly before my Queen. That half of sword in the right hand of the High Priestess was not the hilt and upper half. It was the curved half, the sharp, tapering point, and that sharp tapering point looked to me like a dagger. I placed my body before that of *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*. I feared, I swear, that that High Priestess was about to try to stab my Queen.

Belun-Mea Poa-Poa did not know, of course, the whyfor of my move, but she obeyed my arm, now, as I gently placed her at my other hand—the hand of me farthest from *Lip-Plak-Tengga*. Then, still protectingly, I drew her close again under that Robe of Holies, and looked down at the High Priestess.

Lip-Plak-Tengga was watching me; her eyes met mine, and her eyes flashed to my eyes, now a look of virulent hate, a look of the deadliest rancor. Then her eyes died, dulling as with some inward weakness. The sword-point fell from her hand and tingled upon the stone of the flooring, and as if overcome, herself, with that weakness, she slumped down upon both hands on the flooring.

But she had not swooned. Drawn up

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like a cat on hands and knees, as she was, she was looking, steadily looking, through the space between the *kliau* of the Green, Green God and the throne toward the rear of the altar dais. My eyes swept behind me over my left shoulder in a sort of fearful curiosity. I saw that ten-foot-high, forty-foot-long tapestry of rare old Chinese rug; I saw again that life-size likeness of Genghis Khan worked in vivid threads upon it; and I even noted—for that rug was worn thin with age—the regular spaced knobs of the bamboo pole upholding it, which showed through its thinness at the top.

With a measure of relief but an increase in curiosity, I looked again toward the High Priestess below me. She was still staring toward that rug and there was that in her eyes now—a poignant, entreating look—which caused me to think that she was about to beckon some one who awaited her word from a position behind me. Her very mouth was open, as if she would voice a call.

Yet there was no one behind me. I had seen that for a surety. It must be then—yes, it must be that there was some one behind that rug! My eyes shot back over my left shoulder; then I shuddered. That rug had moved!

There was no doubt in my mind about that. The left-hand end of that rug had rippled and swayed as in a breathing of wind. And yet the balls of red fire on either hand beneath me glowed and smoked upward in slim white pillars, without flexure, without wavering movement of any kind; in all that cave-temple of the *Dobo*, there seemed not a disturbing breath of wind. For the Poonan had suddenly gone silent now, as if they too understood and dreaded that which I was trying to see.

And that which I was trying to see was some one who was behind that rug. It could be nothing else. Some one was walking behind that rug in the space which separated that rug from the white rear walls of the cavern. And he was walking clumsily, ponderously, lurching from side to side; for as he moved along from the left-hand end of the rug, undulations in that rug, where he brushed against it, showed out his ungainly progress.

Directly behind that life-size likeness of Genghis Khan, he halted, swaying. There was an uncouth bulge in the thin old rug. That bulge outlined him, his enormous shoulders, his huge, high head. Those shoulders of him bulged out against that rug above the head of the likeness of Genghis Khan. And that likeness was life-size, remember—over six feet!

But he was far taller than the likeness; that likeness was as the likeness of a mere stripling to him. He must have been over seven feet tall! He was taller than I, I swear, and I was taller than any Poonan.

But he was no pigmy Poonan. He was some monster man. And he was waiting behind that rug. He was watching me through an eyehole somewhere in that unfathomable rug.

And I watched him, watched the colossal outline of him, awed, terrified, trembling. I saw him go, ponderously, waving that tapestry of rug with ungainly lurchings, clutching at it, at times, with monstrous hands.

And then he was gone, and I shivered all over with a cold sweat and felt as if I had lived through some age-long, agonizing dream. I caught, as I came to myself, the triumphant calamitous look in the wickedly slanting eyes of *Lip-Plak-Tengga*. She had not bothered to beckon or call, once my eyes had noted that movement of the rug; but I realized even then that, by some look or sign, she purposely had called up that monster man just to show me, in my moment of mastery, that there was a menace behind the throne.

I gave her that glance grudgingly, and thereupon turned quickly to Golden Feather of Flame on my other hand. And I became aware, now, that Golden Feather of Flame was looking up at my sobered face in a kind of distress.

I folded her in my arms with commingled love and fear, as if, indeed, in my sudden strange terror of that monster man, I was afraid lest I should lose her from my side.

And I was soon to lose her from my side.

"My King," she whispered, her lips quivering with that distress, "I am weary of the ceremony. Dismiss the Poonan, I beg; the hour grows late; and I must leave you for a time. This grass skirt is not befitting her whom you, the Man-Child of Genghis Khan, have chosen for your Queen and bride. And my old women of the council, too, must bathe and anoint me with rich oils and unctuous substances. But I shall come to you soon, O my *Toewan Raj*. I shall come to you in the silken purple

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gown that all my mothers wore, each on her bridal night. I shall come to you in the Elephant Cave ere the noon of to-night!"

I held her close.

"Do not be long, O Golden Feather of Flame," I breathed. "I will wait for you in the Elephant Cave; I will wait for you, counting the moments till midnight. For you are all in all to me," I added fervently, "my Golden Goddess, my Marshal Queen, my beautiful bride, my life!"

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH LIP-PLAK-TENGGA PLEADS AND PROMISES

I DISMISSED the Poonan, said Hyde. They backed out of the *Dobo*, bowing deeply to me every few paces. *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* left my side then, and disappeared through the feathery hangings of the right-hand sacristy.

The High Priestess, followed by her Priestesses, had already withdrawn into the opposite sacristy. Only remained on the dais the Gunner, old *Mohong* and the nine Priests; and these nine Priests now stepped up to me, as I got down from the throne, and removed from my shoulders the Robe of Holies.

Accompanied, or rather escorted, by old *Mohong* and the Gunner, I made out of the *Dobo*. Above, the heavens were crowded with stars, low, white sticky stars which lighted the Jallan Batoe palely, ghostily, as with a kind of twilight. In that vague twilight, beyond the radius of the reflected light from the Glowing *Dobo*, the feathery growths and trees which lined the converging avenues stood out, still and flat and sharp-edged, like the painted wings of scenery on a deep, empty stage—for the Poonan had all disappeared by this time into their various cave-homes.

It was with a new, a masterful assurance in my step and poise that I made out of that *Dobo;* for I was a different man, an altogether different man, from that Willyum Hyde who, with fear and trepidation, had entered that *Dobo* but a few short hours before. Then I had been uncertain, fearful, desperate. I had gone blindly where I was led. I had gone stumbling and trembling into that *Dobo* in ignorance, in great fear of what awaited me there.

But now—how different! The misgivings, the fears, and the terrible doubts which had made me, then, weak and uncertain, thinly armored against surprise and dismay, no longer hedged me 'round. No longer was I fearful, no longer desperate, no longer the blind pawn of circumstance. I was King now, King of the Poonan, King of the whole sacred Jallan Batoe!

And I was unafraid—unafraid of the Poonan, unafraid of my future. I had dominated the Poonan and I had achieved to power—power that was unforeseen, power that was autocratic. From where I stood, at the top of the stone whiteness of those nine-times-nine stairs, I was master, as the saying goes, of all I surveyed. And thus would I go on. I would continue to dominate the Poonan. I would go on from strength to strength, from power to more autocratic power.

The Priestess, *Lip-Plak-Tengga?* I no longer feared her. She, too, believed I was the Man-Child of Genghis Khan; she had helped to make me, for a certitude, King of the Poonan; and the most she could do now, would be to stick me with hate-filled glances, to worry me with the petty spites of an envious woman. The Monster Man behind the rug? A vapor, a mere shadow, a thing too unreal, too unsubstantial, altogether too preposterous to fear, now that the first shudder had passed. I felt safe, I tell you, in this strange new posture of affairs. I was sure of myself, absolutely sanguine of my destiny.

Of course, there was the Green, Green God, that miraculous jewel which had lured me into the Jallan Batoe. Coming down that white flow of the cathedral stairs, I asked myself did I still desire to steal that god.

"I am the Man-Child and King," I told myself, "and as King and Man-Child, I can do anything now, anything. If I still want the Green, Green God, I can steal the Green, Green God. To be sure, though, as Man-Child and King, I do not even have to steal it. I can walk right back into this *Dobo* and take the Green, Green God, as by divine right!"

But that night, as I came down the *Dobo* stairs, I doubted, gravely doubted, whether I wanted that god at all!

Yet that was a doubt, I'll admit, quite out of keeping with my character, with all

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my former hopes and strivings and determinations. Just to see that god and, somehow, to steal it, I had invaded this secret and dread place, I had outfaced all the Poonan. I had seen that god and, seeing it, I knew that it was a tremendous treasure; a treasure worth, out in the world, a thousand times its weight in gold. And I knew, too, that it was a marvel in itself alone, an exquisite work of art, a fascination, a thing to stare at and finger and desire to own.

But I was a different Willyum Hyde, remember, an altogether different Willyum Hyde from that Willyum Hyde who had entered the *Dobo* but a few short hours prior. Tremendous treasure though it was, fascination though it was, to me as I came down those stairs that Green, Green God was but a block of dead stone. Yes, cheap and worthless, paltry and tawdry it seemed to me then; for I thought of a living, breathing woman who was a far more tremendous treasure to me, who was an immeasurably more exquisite and alluring fascination—*Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*, my bride, my all!

That was it! Love had changed me. I who had been hopeless in my love, now was victorious in that love. I had won Golden Feather of Flame. With a kiss, I had married her; and now she was to come to me in the Elephant Cave, my all, my bride! Small wonder that I thought not of *Lip-Plak-Tengga* now; that I thought not of her Monster Man behind the rug, nor even of the Green, Green God. My head and heart were high; I was happy, happy; and so long as *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* were by my side, I would be most pleased—pleased and content, indeed—to be the Man-Child of Genghis Khan, the King of all the Poonan.

Aye, and like a blow it smote me then that never, never could I leave this place where was Golden Feather of Flame. I was chained here—here in the Jallan Batoe—by the shackles of a great love, shackles that were as intangible as sunbeams, but as inexorable as iron bands. Wherever Golden Feather of Flame was, there verily must I remain. Nothing should force me to leave her—nor *Lip-Plak-Tengga*, nor her monster man, nor even desire for the Green, Green God!

And the words of the ancient Poonan women came back to my mind:

"Have paradise on earth, for it is here, it is here, it is here!"

And I looked about me in the night at the great Glowing *Dobo*, towering behind me; at the palm-fringed *Danau* asleep like a sheet of glass beyond; and then up, up at the many remote wan candles of stars. And thus, looking up at one wan star as into a crystal of fate, I said from my heart, but to myself:

"Yea, paradise is here for you, Willyum Hyde, and here you must remain!"

I TURNED thereat, with alacrity, upon my two attending Chieftains. We were arrived, at this time, at the foot of the stone stairs in the broad sweep of the palm-lined avenue before the *Dobo*.

"*Adjies*," I said; "let us go on to my Elephant Cave."

"*Baik*, O *Toewan Raj*," they assented in chorus. "Good, O Great King."

And then on through the pallor of the star-lighted night we walked, we three, up the shadowy Avenue of Palms toward my Elephant Stone.

But suddenly, as we made up that avenue, from the shadow of a palm-tree to one side unexpectedly rushed forth, like some frightened creature of the bosquet, the High Priestess, *Lip-Plak-Tengga*—her bruised, red orchid gown torn away from one golden shoulder, her black, glossy hair fallen in disarray about her like so many hydra-heads, her face flaming and paling by turns, and her dark eyes lustrous in the night as with some inner stress of feeling.

Like some wild creature, wounded and in distress, she fluttered up to within three paces of me. She did not bow. Her voice shaking with that inner stress of feeling, she said hurriedly:

"Tell them to withdraw. Tell the two *Adjies* to go! I would have a word with you alone, O *Raja!*"

Not knowing what else to do, in the startling unexpectedness of it all, I obeyed.

"*Komite!*" I commanded almost automatically. "Go! Go, you two, out of ear-shot. Go on slowly toward the Elephant Stone."

"And do not dare to look back!" she ended for me.

With an obeisance to me, the two Chieftains withdrew. She watched them walk on ahead, her breasts agitated, her breath coming with effort. Struck a little stupid by the shock and surprise of her actions, I

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looked from the men, vanishing into the night, to her. She turned to me then, and her lustrous brown eyes swept into mine. And her eyes were lustrous, I now saw, with a look of desperate appeal.

"O *Raj*," she breathed tremulously, and she put one hand upon my arm; "why will you not love me? Am I not so beautiful as *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa?* Only love me and I will do anything for you—anything because I love you so!"

I strove for a control of myself, for words; but ere I could speak, ere even I could steady myself, she went on, her hand tightening upon my arm, her voice vibrant with the earnestness of her plea:

"Listen, O *Raj!* You are not the Man-Child of Genghis Khan! I know that. I know that, because I am not like these foolish Poonan—they are but children who let me lead them! And because of more facts than one, I know that you are not the Man-Child Who Was To Come!

"Last night when you entered the Jallan Batoe, you said: '*Kas, Kas Deewa!* I'm after the Green, Green God!' My ears heard you say that, and my brains did not forget, like those of the others, that you said that! This very day in the Elephant Cave, you questioned me. I knew then you knew nothing of the Poonan, nothing of the Man-Child of Genghis Khan; for though you quickly thought better of it, you almost asked me why you were called the Man-Child of Genghis Khan!

"Do not be angered at me; it is my great love for you, *Raj*, which tells me to speak now what I do know. And I do know that this very evening in the Stone *Dobo*, when you leaped afoot from the Nine-Times-Nine Throne and the two *Adjies* tore down at my command that pandanus curtain which is ever before the likeness of Genghis Khan on the old, old rug, you looked at that likeness on the rug and your eyes lighted up as though, all at once, a torch had been lighted inside your head.

"But it was no torch! You were thinking inside your head. You were thinking: 'Genghis Khan had red hair like me! Genghis Khan had blue eyes like me! Genghis Khan had a red beard like me!' With your mouth you said no word, yet I knew what was going on behind your lighted eyes! I knew, I knew!"

I was hard hit. She had wounded Achilles in the heel, Willyum Hyde in his vital spot. Pale, shaken, speechless, almost unable to think, I stood before her. One faculty alone was left me. I listened.

"You are the Great Marshal King of the Poonan now, but that is the wonder, the miracle of your life. For you came into the Jallan Batoe, not as a Khan of Tartary bent on carrying out the Sending of the Sword, not as the Man-Child Who Was To Come. Footsore and ragged, you came into the Jallan Batoe, thinking you faced death, daring to face death. For you came because of the same mad motive that drove all those other foot-sore and ragged ones in here before you! You came after the Green, Green God!

"You are an *Orang Mohong!* You are no Tartar, no Man-Child of Genghis Khan. You are a white man! You are a white man, just like all those others who came before you and were either killed swiftly or slowly tortured until they died! Only they all were black-haired, while your red hair has made you King!

"But you have dyed your hair! You must have dyed your hair! Though you knew nothing of Genghis Khan until I told you, still you knew somehow there was a good reason why your hair should be red, your beard should be red. With some red pigment, you dyed your beard, you dyed your hair. And your red hair has made you King!

"But for all that, you are an *Orang Mohong* just the same, just like all those others. And just as all those others were after the Green, Green God, just so are you too after the Green, Green God! For even now you are only awaiting the auspicious moment in which to steal the Green, Green God!"

I stood unmasked as an out-and-out impostor, a tremendous humbug! And yet I had feared she had seen through my sham. From my first meeting with that High Priestess, I had feared she had seen through my sham. Now, for a moral certitude, I knew that she *had* seen through my sham.

Clattering to the ground went my whole armor of circumstance and clap-trap. I stood before her, stripped, naked, quivering with dread. For I felt all was lost with me—disastrously, irretrievably lost!

She looked at me. She saw my agitation, my dreadful distress. And her face flamed, became transfigured with victorious love;

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her eyes glowed in an unutterable ecstasy; and her voice, once vibrant with overwrought emotion, now lost its thin notes—lowered, softened, grew mellow, gentle, tender, tremulous with love!

"But I love you, *Raj!* And I love you not because you are King; I love you for what you really are—a white man, the bravest of all white men! For that, from the very first, I loved you. Many men of the Poonan have tried to kiss me and take me to wife; but that last white man who came into the Jallan Batoe when I was a child and was tortured to death, I could not forget. I remembered him and, remembering him, I refused all the Poonan. I waited for a brave man to come, like him who was tortured. I waited for a man to come, a white man, who would be brave enough to face all the Poonan, single-handed and alone; and a white man who would not confess that he loved me, but a brave white man who would force *me* to confess that I loved him!

"And then you came; and though you were ragged and footsore, you were single-handed and alone, and you faced all the Poonan, and for all that bravery I loved you. I watched you. I watched you with love moist in my eyes. I watched you for the proper moment to tell you that I loved you.

"That moment came, I thought, in the Stone *Dobo* this evening. But you thrust me aside. Twice you thrust me aside. Yet I do not hold that against you; I only love you the more for that. The Poonan then had erected you upon a pedestal, made you King, exalted you almost to the sublimity of a god! You were beside yourself with the wonderful miracle of it all, and you did not understand. But now you know what I do know; and now you realize that what I do know the Poonan may soon discover for themselves!

"O *Toewan Orang Mohong!* O Great White Man! Do not linger in the Jallan Batoe! Remember that the Poonan took long to discover the real purpose of the white men who came before you; but always, in the end, they discovered that purpose. And then they killed! They killed the first three white men, but the fourth and last white man they tortured—slowly, horribly tortured!

"And you, too, are after the Green, Green God. Yours will be the same ghastly fate as that last white man. Just as soon as you try to steal the Green, Green God, just so soon will the Poonan discover you for what you really are—no Tartar, no Man-Child, no King! Only a white man—a white man come after the Green, Green God. And then—ah, then, shall the reckoning be!

"O Bravest of all white men, heed me now, I beg of you. Do not linger in the Jallan Batoe. Do not linger to waste your strength on Golden Feather of Flame. Do not linger one night. *Lengeau!* Fly! Fly with me! Together, you and I and the Green, Green God, let us fly tonight from the Jallan Batoe!"

Strenuously I made to interpose an objection; but her voice rang on, close to my ear, like the notes of a triumphing bell.

"Tonight is the time! The Poonan never will expect you to take the Green, Green God tonight. Tonight they are elated in their deliverance from the Sending of the Sword. Tonight is the time! Leave all the Poonan, leave the Jallan Batoe, leave even *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* behind you forever——"

I cried out then. Her poisonous plea for me to desert Golden Feather of Flame stabbed me to the heart. As I never had cried out when she had shorn me of all my clap-trap, stripped me naked, I cried out then, in a great anger, at her attempt to rob me of whatever sense of chivalry, whatever qualities of manliness were mine.

"Be done, be done, *Lip-Plak-Tengga!*" I cried. "I *am* a white man; but I'm man enough to stick by my marriage to Golden Feather of Flame! She married me straight and honest with a kiss, according to the Poonan marriage ceremony. And I'll stand by that marriage ceremony! She's my bride in the sight of all—aye, in the sight of Heaven!"

I was thoroughly exasperated. I leaned toward her angrily, almost threateningly.

"Only you know that I am a white man. To these Poonan, remember, I am still the Man-Child of Genghis Khan, their Great Marshal King! The Poonan will not value your word against mine, the word of their King! You can do naught to hurt me, *Lip-Plak-Tengga;* naught to help me! I am King here, I tell you, and I don't need your help. I don't need any one's help. If I want the Green, Green God, I'll take the Green, Green God!"

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CHAPTER XX

MORE ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAPPENED IN THE AVENUE OF PALMS

LIP - PLAK - TENGGA grasped my shoulder, Hyde continued. With one hand she covered my mouth. She shuddered all over. Wildly, fearfully, this way and that, she looked about her.

"Hush!" she breathed in a low, tense whisper. "Speak not so loud, for you do not know of what you speak. *You* take the Green, Green God? *You* take the Green, Green God because you are King? *Nda, nda, nda;* it is unthinkable!

"Because you are King, the Poonan never wil' .ve up to you the Green, Green God! To them, the god is more sacred than any King! It is more sacred to them than the graves of their dead and worshiped ancestors, than even the person of the True Man-Child of Genghis Khan! The Green, Green God is a great god to the Poonan, O *Raj*—a god of unwholesome dread!"

I listened in a kind of wonder and, as I listened, I began to understand the reason for the awe in which the Poonan held the Green, Green God.

"No Poonan will touch the Green, Green God," the Priestess was whispering, "nor allow it to be touched. The god is never supposed to be taken from the Stone *Dobo*, for once the god is taken from the *Dobo*, that very moment will all our good fortune veer away from us, and misfortune blow upon us like a pestilential wind!

"*Ahê!* The crops will wither and decay, the hoofs of the cattle will rot off, the rain will fall without end, the women will be barren, and by all manner of grisly diseases both women and men will die off in the flower of their strength! And all the while the earth will rock mightily and shake the stones of the Jallan Batoe like bread-pellets in the palm of your hand!

"And all the while, too, as if battening on the terrible misfortunes, the Green, Green God will come slowly to life. Not in a day nor even, perhaps, in a moon; but just as it turned to stone from the moment it entered the Stone *Dobo*, just so from the moment it is taken out of the *Dobo*, slowly, inevitably, will the Green, Green God come to life. And once it comes to life, all, all will be lost with us—lost forever!

"For, while we lie in the rocking caves, tossing and sweating and gasping for life from the sickish air, the Green, Green God will fly from cave to rocking cave. It will fly, screaming, at us! It will cling to our golden skins! And it will peck at our backs with its cruel bill until it exposes our hearts!

"It knows to the precise fraction of an inch just where, under the flesh, our hearts are located. It hungers for our hearts! And our hearts it will eat. *Arrê!* It will peck the heart of each one of us slowly away, until we are cold in death!"

The whole legend reminded me of the Kea parrot of New Zealand which bites through the backs of sheep to their kidneys. And the whole legend was so grotesque, so incredible, that I almost doubted that even the simple-hearted Poonan could believe it. But I had no doubts about *Lip-Plak-Tengga's* believing it. Because of the enfevered pleas the High Priestess had previously uttered, I realized that she was telling me not what she feared, but only what the Poonan feared.

"You do not put any faith in that legend, eh, *Lip-Plak-Tengga?*" I asked tentatively.

She shook her disheveled locks of hair.

"*Nda, nda!*" she answered emphatically. "The Green, Green God can not come to life. Only the poor Poonan fear that. But I do not fear that. In real life, there is no bird like the Green, Green God—with claws so sharp and beak so cruel, as if it would indeed peck out men's hearts. And so I do not fear the Green, Green God. I know, and all my Priests and Priestesses know, that the Green, Green God is but a large green stone, wondrously carved!"

I smiled. I smiled to myself. It was not the first time I had heard of a priesthood that, far from sharing the fears of the populace, rather profited by keeping alive those foolish fears. There were the priests of Egypt who stood behind the idols and, for rich offerings, spoke oracular things through the mouths of those idols. There are to this day the Brahmins of India who mark certain animals as sacred in order that they may pass comfortable, easy livings caring for them.

And thus with the Priests and Priestesses of the Poonan. For it seems invariably to follow that they who always are near the gods come to know most certainly that the gods are made of clay.

And yet, come to think of it, such skepticism from *Lip-Plak-Tengga* was more than

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strange, even if she were the High Priestess of the god. For she had said that there was no bird in real life just like the Emerald Parrot. To judge from that, she never had seen a live parrot. And I remembered thereat that neither had I seen, in the Jallan Batoe, where she had passed all her days, any birds at all of the parrot family.

Still I knew that there were birds and fowl plentiful enough in the Field of Stones. That morning I had noted, in the tropical growths between the stones, musters of peacocks, nides of golden and silver pheasants, and flights of swallows white as those in the great limestone caves of Gomanton in British North Borneo. Floating on the *Danau*, I had seen, in the light from the *Dobo* that evening, flocks of swans black as those of Australia, long-necked divers called snake-birds because of their appearance, and numberless white, white egrets.

But in neither jungle nor *Danau*, nor anywhere else within the confines of the great crater, had I glimpsed a single parrot. No, nor a cockatoo, parrakeet, red lory, or any other species of parrot.

And yet, withal, parrots are abundant in Borneo as, indeed, in all the East Indies; only, in Borneo, parrots are most abundant in the hot, jungle-choked lowlands. They are so far in as the confluence of the Loeang with the Barito. Amid the uplands just without the Jallan Batoe, they are never seen. And even if they could attain those mountainous parts, they never could soar, like eagles, over the altitudinous walls of the crater; nor could they fly into the Jallan Batoe, like owls and bats, through that clammy black tunnel.

NEVER had the Poonan seen a parrot, therefore, save the emerald effigy which was the Green, Green God. But that Emerald Parrot, hooked of bill, sharp of claw, was of a certainty to them a fierce predatory-looking bird; and so it was no wonder to me, now that I understood, that the Poonan in their childish simplicity of mind had built up legends about that parrot—magnifying its predatory qualities, making of it, in the end, a spirit of evil, a murderous, horrible god.

But her voice once again vibrant with the intensity of her purpose, the High Priestess was speaking.

"That is why the Poonan killed the first three white men and tortured the last white man—not because they feared those white men personally, but because they feared that those white men would steal the Green, Green God, which those white men surely would have done. And, fearing that, the Poonan feared even more greatly that once the Green, Green God were taken out of the Stone *Dobo*, it would come to life and peck away their hearts.

"But I do not fear the Green, Green God; nor do you, if you are like those other white men. You are brave. Why linger then? Tonight is your night of nights! Not because it is your bridal night; *nda, nda!* Tonight is your night of nights because the elated Poonan never will expect you to steal the Green, Green God on this, your bridal night!"

She dropped to her knees upon the grass of the avenue and clung to my legs. Her voice rose with abject pleading.

"Say yes!" she cried. "Only yes, *Raj!* Put *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* from your mind! Do not feel chained to her by that foolish marriage kiss! Fly, fly with me and the Green, Green God!"

She was altogether unreasonable. But it was no use getting angry at her. That only added to her irrationality, I saw; made her deaf to all reasoning. And I must reason with her. I felt, now, I must show her conclusively why I did not want her help or herself.

Deliberately I disengaged my legs from her clinging arms. As I stood over her then, deliberately I made answer.

"Why should I steal the Green, Green God, *Lip-Plak-Tengga?*" I said. "There is no reason at all for me to steal the Green, Green God. I am King here; I am master of the Poonan. I fear no one, not even you or your knowledge, *Lip-Plak-Tengga;* for only you know that I am a white man and you alone can never hurl me headlong from my position as *Raj*.

"Besides, I love Golden Feather of Flame, and Golden Feather of Flame is my bride and Queen. With her, I must remain here; for I am happy here, *Lip-Plak-Tengga*—wholly, utterly happy! I don't want the Green, Green God!"

She looked up at me quickly, in a sort of hurt surprise, as if, indeed, my words were as a knife-thrust in her side.

"But," she palpitated, "but you are a white man!"

I nodded my red head.

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"Assuredly I am a white man," I assented. "I am a white man, just like all those other white men. Footsore and ragged, a white man, as you say, I entered the Jallan Batoe to steal the Green, Green God. But I found here something that was dearer to me than any Green, Green God. I found *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa;* I found paradise on earth!

"You can see for yourself, *Lip-Plak-Tengga*, for me to steal the Green, Green God now would be folly, madness, sheer suicide! The Poonan would rise up, as you say, and whelm me over. I would lose my paradise, I would lose *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa!* It would mean my disgrace, my downfall and my death."

She did not answer; only bowed her head.

"*Nda, nda!*" I said with a certain revulsion at the dreadful debacle I myself had pictured. "I do not want the Green, Green God!"

I turned on my heel then. I strode away from her. I strode up that shadowy Avenue of Palms.

But, not six feet on, I looked back. She was standing then, very still, looking after me. And there was in her eyes a terrible look. It was the same look that had flashed, once before in the *Dobo*, from her eyes into mine. It was a look of virulent hate, a look of deadliest rancor—it was the look of a woman scorned!

CHAPTER XXI

WHEREIN HYDE WAITS IN THE ELEPHANT CAVE, AND THERE COMES TO HIM A WOMAN

OLD MOHONG and the Gunner, pacing as a guard of honor before the Elephant Stone (Hyde pursued), drew together as I approached. They were garbed only in *jawats* now, having stripped themselves of their sacred *pehang* skins. I did not ask the reason of that. They were kotowing before me; but I ignored that also. One idea possessed my mind.

"*Adjies!*" I said sharply. "Tell me. What would happen if the Green, Green God should be taken from the *Dobo?*"

Like spent bows, the Chieftains bobbed erect. They shivered. Actually, in all that heat, they shivered. The Gunner moistened his lips.

"You are playing on our fears, *Raj*—it would be too terrible! All kinds of misfortunes would befall us!"

"It would come to life!" old *Mohong* cried out, his voice quavering with age and nameless dread. "It would come to life, it would come to life!"

"Enough!" I said bruskly. And I walked on up the nine stone stairs into the Elephant Cave.

Here, in the huge Elephant Cave, I found that the two *Adjies* had replenished the torches in the many sockets along the walls. The immense cave was almost as light as day now, with a great ring of dancing flames. I advanced under those flames toward the rush-plaited couch. And here on the couch, I found the reason why the two Chieftains had stripped themselves of their leopard skins. They had laid those sacred skins over my own *pehang* skin on that rush-plaited couch!

From that, now, I dimly began to realize that my own *pehang* skin had been laid there the night prior both as a covering for me during the night and as a garb for me during the day. That seemed to be the primitive fashion of the Poonan even in regard to their King. But so much was I the white man and especially the Englishman, ever scornful of others' customs of dress, that, even though I realized fully now that the first *pehang* skin was supposed to be worn by me, I resolved not to wear it, but to stick to my own familiar trousers and hickory shirt, mud-mottled and unkempt though they were.

And yet that could have little to do, I knew, with this laying of more skins upon my couch. Why, I asked myself, should the two Chieftains rob themselves of their skins in order to lay those skins upon my couch? It must be—aye, it was a manifestation of respect and of reverence! They had robbed themselves of their skins, I saw, and had laid those sacred skins upon my couch because that rush-plaited couch was to be my bridal bed!

Now that touch of nature was so elemental, so homely and yet so poignant with reverence that it tugged at my heartstrings, shook me to the wells of my being. I sat down upon the couch. And I thought no longer of *Lip-Plak-Tengga*, her importunities, her promises and her scorn. I thought only of her whom I had married with a kiss, whom I then was awaiting—

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Belun-Mea Poa-Poa, the beautiful and good!

"Even now," I said to myself, "in some cave in the monster rocks, probably in one of those sacristies of the *Dobo*, the old women of the Poonan are bathing and anointing *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* with holy oils, robing her in the silks of her mothers and preparing her, according to custom, for this sacred night. And for this sacred night I, too, must prepare myself. I must make myself pure in thought, humble in spirit. I must be worthy the love of Golden Feather of Flame!"

Made nervous by waiting, excited by my thoughts, I got afoot from the couch and began pacing up and down the whole length of the cave, around and around the four torch-lighted stone walls. And I felt, then, so unworthy and so base as I thought of her who, though born of an unenlightened pagan people, was yet as pure and sweetly unconscious of evil as the most innocent girl back home, that I wished, dearly wished, that I could pray.

But I never have been a praying man. Never have I prayed or thought of such things, excepting when fever slapped us down in the jungles, or a man was buried at sea. And now no word of prayer came to me, as I paced back and forth, but a few words of that short and simple service for burial at sea.

"That won't do; that won't do at all," I told myself. "But I must pray. Golden Feather of Flame will be here soon, very soon. I must pray!"

Back and forth, back and forth under the torches that lighted my cave I paced, the while I cudgeled my brains in a great effort to remember something of those prayers I had neglected in my youth. Back and forth, back and forth, what time I grew more and more nervous with waiting, more and more excited by my thoughts. Back and forth, back and forth, for ten minutes, for twenty, for a full half-hour.

And then, suddenly, as I neared again that rush-plaited couch, I halted dead in my nervous pacing. I hearkened and, as I hearkened, I heard once again the sound. It was the sound of light footsteps—my beautiful bride, I thought.

THERE entered the low doorway of my cave-chamber then, in the trice that my heart stopped beating, a woman alone. But she was not my beautiful bride. She was the High Priestess, *Lip-Plak-Tenggal*

I started back. I was startled, indeed, by this second unexpected appearance of the dark-eyed woman; I was the more startled by the fact that again she was alone, unattended by her retinue of priests and priestesses; but what startled me most and above all was a certain change in her aspect.

No longer was she garbed in that torn but colorful orchid gown. She was garbed now in a plain gown of rank pandanus. And save that that gown covered her from throat to ankles, it was just like the *cogon* skirt Golden Feather of Flame had worn, in that it suggested the poor drab garb of one humiliated and abashed. It was a slave's garb! I knew that. I knew that because she carried in her arms against her agitated breasts, just like a slave, a *lebet* or bound, covered basket of interwoven rattan.

Her black glossy hair knotted plainly behind her head by a fillet of pandanus, her face flaming as with a sense of shame, she stepped up to me and began bowing low hurriedly, nine times. Nervous and excited as I was, I stepped forward impulsively ere she finished bowing.

"Be done, be done, *Lip-Plak-Tengga*," I said quickly, "and tell me what is your business with me again this night. Why do you carry that bound, covered basket? Why do you come to me for the second time alone?"

She left off bowing and lifted her dark slant eyes to me.

"I come from Golden Feather of Flame," she said. "On this, her marriage night, I come on a slave's errand——"

"What!" I interrupted. "Golden Feather of Flame? You come from Golden Feather of Flame?"

She nodded, her face paling as in the draw of some violent emotion.

"Listen, O *Raja!*" she exclaimed. "Once I was the High Priestess of the Poonan, and I had many maidens to wait on me and many young men to do my bidding. The people reverenced me, the priests and priestesses reverenced me, and I moved no hand to serve any one! But tonight, O Man-Child, you see *Lip-Plak-Tengga*, and while she is still High Priestess, she is also a slave! *Ahé*—" and her voice wailed through the cave—"a slave I am, a slave and handmaid of your *Orlok Radenajo*,

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Golden Feather of Flame! For I bring to you, O Man-Child, a gift from your beautiful bride!"

So that was it! So that was why she had flushed and paled at having to come to me! She was assailed by outraged pride. She who had tried to be my *Orlok Radenajo*, was compelled to perform, now, the duties of a handmaid to the woman I had selected as my Queen! Nor did I question the propriety of that. If Golden Feather of Flame ordered it so, I thought, it must be all right. And really I was only interested in that she came from my bride, that she came bearing a gift from my bride.

"What do you bring from Golden Feather of Flame?" I asked. "What can she be sending me? She should be here herself soon." And there was a kind of anxious question in my last words.

But she ignored that. She returned:

"The gift is in this basket. I do not know what that gift is. I am only the slave who brings it. For *li-liat!*" she added, her voice rising again. "Look! *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* no longer trusts me—I who am nearest her in rank! She has put her gift not into my hands. She has put her gift into this basket. And she has fastened down the rattan cover of the basket and bound the whole basket 'round and 'round with rattan ropes!"

She held the *lebet* out to me.

"Take it," she said; then significantly, almost maliciously, added, "It must be some valuable thing, surely!"

Now, there was in those last words something which halted me, even as I made eagerly to outreach for that basket. I looked at her sharply, suspiciously.

"A valuable thing, is it?" I repeated in a tone somewhat similar to the one she had used. "Well, then, you might care to stay and see that valuable thing, eh, *Lip-Plak-Tengga? Nda, nda!*" And as she made, in quite a flurry, to withdraw. "You stay right here!"

I took the basket from her hands. My eyes never left her eyes.

"Until I open this basket and see what is inside of it, *Lip-Plak-Tengga*," I insisted, a metallic rasp creeping into my voice, "you stay right here!"

I laid the basket upon the floor then and stooped over it. My hands shaking despite all my efforts for self-control, I tore away the fibers of rattan which bound that basket about and about like ropes. The cover was held fast by several threads of rattan plaited and twisted around a *bilian* pin, stout as a bolt. I jerked out that pin. Then, my breath held in a sort of dread of what I might see, I threw up the cover.

And then—then I sunk down beside that basket upon my knees.

Within, under the cover, wrapped about some larger object, was that little skirt of rank *cogon* grass which my beloved had worn that very evening when she had offered herself as a sacrifice for the Sin of the Poonan.

Of two things, I was sure then: The larger object wrapped inside that grass skirt was the gift; and that gift really was from my bride. For that simple little grass skirt whispered of *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* as intimately as the delicate handwriting on an envelope whispers of some more civilized, though never more lovely lady.

I looked up at the High Priestess. And I found that she was watching me closely in my love-drunken elation, watching me with eyes that seemed burning with envy.

Now, never was I the man to trifle with the hearts of women. And so it was that I did not want this woman, now, to look on while I unwrapped that skirt and, in every eager breath and tremulous flush of face, showed my intense love for the other woman. I wanted to spare her what pain I could. Wherefore, although I was all a-flush and quick-breathed to see what was the gift within that skirt, I left off and stood up now to dismiss her.

"You may go now, *Lip-Plak-Tengga*," I said. "With my own eyes I have seen that the gift is truly from *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*. So you may go now; you may go!"

Flaming and paling, bowing deeply the while, she stepped slowly back toward the low doorway. And looking at her, then, I felt truly sorry for her. Indeed, I felt it almost as a fault of mine that she should love me, as she had said she did, and so love me in vain. Born of my love-exalted mood, then, a sudden inspiration flashed into my mind. I would do what I could to remedy that fault of mine.

"*Lip-Plak-Tengga*," I added gently, "forgive me for having doubted you. Let bygones be bygones, and let us hereafter be good friends. We are both rulers of the Poonan, you as High Priestess and I as

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King. My allegiance may be worth something to you. And I, because I respect your intellect and that secret knowledge you have of who I really am, will ever be glad to listen to your advice. Shall we not be friends?"

She halted sharply in her bowing. She looked at me, her face burning as red as if I had suggested something shameful. And then up to her full height she drew herself, so that she was as a tower of ivory, a tower of pride and arrogance.

"Tonight in the Stone *Dobo*," she said, a cold ring in her voice, "you chose between *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* and me. *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa* you raised from the ground and put upon the Nine-Times-Nine Throne beside you. You kissed her and by so doing made her your *Radenajo* and bride. You could have done all that for me. I had offered, shamelessly offered, myself to you. But me you cast down, thrust aside, left to lie forgotten. You could have done no worse had you severed my head from my shoulders with the *Mandau* of Genghis Khan!

"And now you offer me a cold friendship, a venal friendship! You fear the Poonan and you want my help, now, in order to control them! Tonight in the Avenue of Palms I taught you a lesson. I showed you then how completely I had seen through your fraud. You fear now that the Poonan may see through your fraud even as I have. You want me to keep quiet, to let the Poonan discover that fraud for themselves if they can, and even to aid you if they do discover that fraud!

"Ah, you think that I still love you! Yes, I did love you once. But when you refused to do what I begged of you in the Avenue of Palms this night, I lost all love for you. You are a white man, but you no longer are a brave white man! Love has sapped your heart, robbed you of all daring. And *Lip-Plak-Tengga* will never, never love a coward.

"I hate you now! I hate you now because you want my friendship. That is a despicable insult to me! To me who loved you, you offer—friendship, a venal friendship! And I—I give you my hate, my everlasting hate; hate that shall bring about, soon or later, your disgrace, your downfall and your death!"

She broke off. She laughed that odd, irritating laugh of hers.

"But until then, O *Toewan Raj*, O Man-Child of Genghis Khan," she mocked, "I shall bow to you—bow to you the nine times!" And she bowed to the flooring, once, twice, three times, four——

But I could stand it no longer. She was only mocking me, only ironically insulting me, with each bow. I stepped toward her.

"You bow to me because you are afraid of me!" I exploded, my voice choking with fury. "I am a white man, but I'm King here, and you are afraid of me. I am King here, I tell you, and you can do nothing against me or mine! All you can do is to spit out your venom in words, you cat! But you'll bow to me and continue to bow, while I so order; for you are afraid of me—afraid!"

She stood to her full height once more before me—a quivering mast that flaunted the red pennon of defiance.

"Afraid of you!" she cried, her voice harsh and grating. "Afraid of you!" She leaned toward me. Her voice dropped to a vibrant whisper. "Ah, you do not know! But there is some one who does my command—some one whom the Poonan fear as a dread thing—some one whom I alone, as High Priestess, could loose upon you at any hour with a single word! And I fear you? *Nda, nda;* never! It is you, you who should fear."

She broke off and, almost unconsciously it seemed, she turned her head slowly, covertly, and looked over one shoulder through the low doorway behind her.

My eyes followed the direction her eyes had indicated. My muscles tensed as if for a struggle; my heart dead with the chill of some unaccountable dread, I gazed through that low doorway. Through that doorway the light from my cave danced in an oblong pane of brightness upon the floor and the farther wall of that horseshoe-shaped corridor; beyond that pane of brightness, on either side the corridor circled away toward the invisible entrances, but save for that pane of brightness that corridor was black, nothing but blackness. I could see no one. Certainly, in that blackness, I saw naught to fear.

And yet her whisper, her unconscious, covert look behind her, had called up a vision before me. That vision, truly, was only in my brains; but still I saw it as distinctly as if it were a reality immediately before my eyes. For I saw once again that

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huge shape I had glimpsed in the *Dobo*—that monster man hiding behind the old, old rug, ruffling that rug with ungainly lurchings, peering through that rug at me. And I shuddered.

A low, irritating laugh sounded in my ears. For the second time that evening I caught in *Lip-Plak-Tengga's* wickedly slanting eyes that triumphant, calamitous look. And then, with a deep mocking bow, a jingle from her gold anklets, she was gone—gone through the low doorway into the blackness of the corridor!

CHAPTER XXII

HOW TERROR ENTERED THE ELEPHANT CAVE

WITH a hand that shook a little I took down from a socket in the nearest wall one of the many torches, and with it held high above my head, stepped out through the low doorway to make sure that *Lip-Plak-Tengga* really had gone, and to make sure, above all, that she had left no one behind her.

I groped around the left-hand bend of the corridor, my torch arousing leaping shadows in the blackness, until I could make out the arched entrance gaping open into the pale light of the starry night. Then I came back, passed by the low lighted doorway of my cave, and circled 'round the other bend of the corridor until I stepped out upon the head of the nine stairs in the right-hand entrance.

Below me old *Mohong* was pacing slowly. I called out to him.

"*Adjie*," I called, "which way did *Lip-Plak-Tengga* go?"

He waved one arm, lean with age, in the direction of the Stone *Dobo* far down the avenue.

"And there was no one with her?"

"*Nda, nda, Raj*." He shook his white head. "No one."

"*Baik*," I said, quite relieved. "It is good."

He made to turn away.

"*Adjie*," I said, "you and the other Chief watch closely. If you see any one or anything skulking about here, report to—" I broke off. I asked, "What is the hour?"

"It is within a stride of the noon of night," he answered.

"Well, watch closely until then," I said. "When the noon of night comes, report to me what you have seen. If you have seen anything unusual, report to me what you have seen that is unusual. If you have seen nothing out of the ordinary, report to me that you have seen nothing. But I must know either way.

"I want no one to enter here tonight. Save *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa*, let no one enter here tonight. Understand? And do you and the other Chieftain keep pacing close before the foot of either stairs. You tell the other Chief what I have said. I must have you both within hearing, if I call. And I may call. There is a reason."

He bowed.

"What can be done will be done, O *Raj*," he returned. "And I will report to you at the noon of the night."

My fears somewhat subdued now, I thought only to look down that Avenue of Palms to see if I could glimpse my beautiful Golden Feather of Flame coming toward me. But I could not see far. The light from the stars was so feeble, the avenue so shadowed by the stones and palms, that I could only see for a distance of some hundred feet. And within that distance, with the exception of the Gunner and old *Mohong*, no living creature stirred.

But thought of my bride had warmed my heart, now, with a certain delicious curiosity. I would determine, ere she came, just what was the nature of her gift to me on this night of nights. The torch in my hand, I made quickly back into my cave and replaced that torch in its socket in the wall. Then, with eager hands, I lifted that rattan-woven basket from the floor and set it upon the couch.

I sat down upon the couch beside it. I sat down beside it in such a manner that it was between me and the doorway; for I wanted to keep one eye on that doorway the while I examined the gift, in order that I should be aware the moment my bride entered. And momentarily, now, I expected her to enter.

I looked into the basket then. To see what was that gift within the little grass skirt, I lifted that skirt and the gift it enfolded from the basket. And then—then I dropped skirt and enwrapped gift and all back into the basket. For, of a sudden, into my ears had crept once again the sound of light footsteps.

"That's the tread of her lovely little feet!" I thought.

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And I listened. Like soft words of love, the sound of her footsteps caressed my ears, crept through my body, stole into my heart of hearts. I leaped afoot. I waited, trembling.

SHE came slowly into the cave, her fair form wrapped in a robe as regally purple as the robe of a Roman empress, her golden hair tied with charming simplicity away from her neck and rippling down her back, her hands clasped together before her, and her silky brushes of lashes shading modestly her greenish downcast eyes. But, quite suddenly, with a bewitching rose blushing under the damask of either cheek, she looked up at me and smiled shyly.

Then, quickly, she caught sight of the basket opened upon the couch. Her eyes widened, she fluttered toward me, and she plucked with one slim hand at my sleeve. With the other, she pointed at the basket.

"What is that? What is that in the basket?" she asked. "What is that wrapped up in my grass skirt?"

I was taken aback by her question.

"Of all women, Golden Feather of Flame," I said, "you should know what is hidden in that skirt. For it is the gift you sent me on this, our bridal night."

A bewildered expression swam across her greenish eyes.

"I?" she asked; then hurriedly: "But I—I sent you no gift, O *Raj!* From me there was no wedding-gift but my own poor self!"

I could not speak. I could hardly think. I stood there for a full minute, an intolerable minute, looking from her to the basket and back again in darting glances of perplexity. When I spoke, my voice sounded so mechanical I barely recognized it as my own.

"But *Lip-Plak-Tengga!*" I said. "While I waited for you tonight, *Lip-Plak-Tengga* came to me—came here to me with a gift from you."

"*Nda, nda!*" cried Golden Feather of Flame, her face white as ivory. "*Lip-Plak-Tengga* brought no gift from me. I sent no marriage gift at all. And had I sent you any marriage gift more than my own unworthy self, *Lip-Plak-Tennga* should have been the last woman to have brought it! She does not serve me in such slavish ways. She is High Priestess and nearest me in rank. And she hates me! She always has hated me. Because I ever have been the one woman above her, always has she hated me. O Man-Child, she came to you tonight for no good purpose. She hates both me and mine!"

As plainly as I saw the torches sputtering along the walls, just that plainly did I see, now, that there was some ugly plot afoot. Surely enough, *Lip-Plak-Tengga* had brought that gift for no good purpose. There was no doubt about that. She hated Golden Feather of Flame; she hated me. That gift, whatever it was, was a gift of hate!

I leaped upon the couch. I would see what was that gift! I picked up from the basket that skirt and the object it contained. I did not hear the sound of dragging footsteps in the corridor. I was too overwrought. My heart thumping as with a hemorrhage, my breath coming in gasps, my hands trembling as though from palsy, I tore away the skirt of grass from about that object.

And thereat I no longer breathed; the grass skirt fell from the nerveless fingers of my right hand to the floor; I was like one affrighted.

I was affrighted. For I held in my left hand that which I had heard so much about, that which I had come into the Jallan Batoe expressly to find, that which I had hoped, once, to take back with me to the outer world—a single emerald, one foot long and carved like a parrot—the Green, Green God!

I could not move. I looked at that emerald parrot, shimmering green in the torch-light, and I could not move. Fear was upon me. Fear for Golden Feather of Flame. Fear for myself. Fear of the Poonan, and of what they might do once they found the god gone from the Dobo!

Slow and insidious as a cobra, that fear crawled through my brain, wrapped tight about my brain, wrapped tighter, tighter. . .

A scream shattered that vise-grip of terror. But that scream came not from *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa!* That scream came from another. It was a man's scream, a scream quavering with age, with dismay, with awful horror.

The emerald parrot fell from my hand upon the couch. I swung 'round. There in the low doorway, his rheumy eyes almost popping from their sockets, his parchment

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skin drawn into his toothless cheeks as though his head were a Chinaman's head, smoke-cured by the Dyaks, his whole aged frame shaking, as in ague, with terrible fright, was *Mohong Wook*, the old *Adjie*.

It was all my own fault; I had told him to report to me, and he had come to report to me. It was midnight—the noon of the night. He had entered the Elephant Cave to make his report to me and entering thus with sound of dragging footsteps I could not hear because of the thumping of my own heart, the gasping of my own breath, he had seen the Green, Green God.

He knew, now, that the Green, Green God was gone from the *Dobo*. And he would tell all the Poonan that the Green, Green God was gone from the *Dobo!* For now he was screaming, screaming with horror:

"You have stolen the god from the *Dobo!* And it will come to life, it will come to life!"

CHAPTER XXIII

TELLS IN WHAT WISE HYDE MADE USE OF THE RATTAN CORDS ABOUT THE BASKET

I SPRANG toward him. But some one was before me. And that some one was Golden Feather of Flame. None other than Golden Feather of Flame!

White as ivory she was, but controlled. She had not screamed. Even when, with such startling suddenness, she had seen the Green, Green God upraised in my hand, she had not screamed. She loved me greatly, so she did. For it was her great love for me which had enabled her to conquer all her fears of the Green, Green God. And it was love for me, love and fear for me, which caused her to act now.

She was no brown girl of the beaches. She was a thousand times nobler and braver than ever I could hope to be. I had told *Lip-Plak-Tengga* that I would stand by Golden Feather of Flame; but it was not I, it was Golden Feather of Flame who was standing by me. She had married me, according to the Poonan marriage ceremony, with a kiss of love; and she was standing by that marriage ceremony more religiously and far more courageously than most women, brown or white, would have done.

I had in my possession a dread thing. It mattered not how I had come into possession of that dread thing. It only mattered now that, because of that dread thing, I faced not only complete loss of rank and happiness, but torture, perdition, utter misery of body and soul. She knew what I faced, yet she was not turning from me; she was facing all that with me. For even at that moment, she was helping me, protecting me. She was trying, at that very moment, to still old *Mohong's* outcries.

And had she been the Green, Green God come to life, in truth, her efforts to still old *Mohong* could not have been more in the nature of a frenzied, fluttering attack. She tried to cover his mouth with her hand, with an impromptu gag formed hurriedly from the looseness of her silken robe. But he would not be muffled. So she scratched at his face, beat at his face, frantically pulled at his white hair.

To me, she cried distractedly:

"*Raj, Raj!* Come! Help me, help me, or we are lost!"

But I was upon him then. I had been leaping toward him, and in that leap, swiftly, with whelming admiration, I had witnessed her frantic actions, formed that judgment of her splendid character. However long it takes to tell it here, it all took place in a mere fraction of time, a bare eye-flutter—to be precise, a double leap of my body over a ten-foot space. And then I was upon him.

I grasped him fiercely by his withered neck. He was but a shriveled-up old man, half paralyzed with fright; I was a giant above him—virile, powerful. I did not realize my strength. I grasped him by his withered neck so fiercely that his face turned blue and his screams died suddenly with a kind of hollow rattle. When I released my hand, which I did quickly, he slapped down on the floor upon his face.

More gently then, I turned him over. His wrinkled lids were closed now, and only his lips were blue. I had choked his screams in his throat, but it was with fright that he had fainted so dead away. For all I knew, he may have thought, in the blindness of that fright, that it was not Golden Feather of Flame or I, but the Green, Green God come to life, who was attacking him.

But I was given no time to conjecture. Golden Feather of Flame, having rushed to the couch, now came as hastily back to my side.

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"Quick!" she whispered. "Here are those rattan ropes from about that basket. Here, here!"

I took them from her brave little hands. She seemed to know just what to do, for without pause, she breathed hurriedly:

"Bind him up. Gag and bind him, *Raj*. Quick, or we are lost! If he wakes now, he will scream his discovery to all the Poonan."

Some minutes later, I stood up. Old *Mohong*, cruelly assaulted and abused, lay upon his back on the floor. He had come to consciousness during the while I had been binding him. His rheumy old eyes were open now, but he could neither speak nor move.

His toothless mouth was gagged with a stout gag made from a tatter of cloth, torn from my hickory shirt and wound about that *bilian* pin from the basket, the whole held immovably in his mouth by a ribbon of rattan tied behind his white head. His hands were bound together behind his back with ribbons of rattan, thin and pliable as twine but stronger. His feet were tied together at the ankles with rattans thick as cords. And thick cords of rattan wound about his whole body, trussing him so securely and tightly that he could twitch not so much as a muscle.

All that had been done in compliance to *Belun-Mea Poa-Poa's* orders. She had taken the dominant position, now. She was cooler than I in that black time of despair, more masterful. She was one woman in ten thousand.

Her purple robe clinging and fluttering about her luxuriant form, she came toward me, as I stood up, bearing in her right hand a torch she had taken down from one of the sockets in the walls.

"*Keha, Raj*," she said. "Come. Let us carry the old *Adjie* to a place where he will not be seen. He cannot work himself free now, or cry out. Let us carry him out into the blackness of the corridor."

"*Baik*," I assented. "It is good."

And I bent down, picked up the bound and aged Chieftain, and like so much luggage slung him under one arm. Then, with Golden Feather of Flame going before me with the torch to light the way, I stooped under the low doorway and entered the horseshoe-shaped corridor and turned after her toward the left-hand entrance.

Where the horseshoe-shaped corridor took a sharp bend away from the low doorway of my cave toward the left-hand entrance, we paused. Here, at this bend, one could see the oblong pane of brightness from the low doorway of my cave on the one hand, and on the other the left-hand entrance gaping open into the darkening night. But twenty feet or more separating the bend from either of those brighter points, that bend was thickly black save when lighted by a torch, as it was now.

And here, upon the stone flooring, I deposited the old *Adjie*, pushing him against the wall as if he were a roll of matting.

"Be quick," urged Golden Feather of Flame. "We will leave him here. We must not wait. There is not much time. And that which is upon the couch has given us much to do this night!"

She did not mention the Green, Green God by name. She only spoke of the Green, Green God, now, in words that were remote and most cautious, and in a voice that was cold as with the chill of despair.

And it was well that she spoke so remotely and cautiously of the Green, Green God. For, on a sudden, as I straightened myself after depositing old *Mohong* upon the floor, I saw over her shoulder, standing in the corridor some ten feet within the gaping left-hand entrance, the second *Adjie*, he whom I called the Gunner.

Whether he had seen the accursed God, shimmering a deep green upon the couch in the chamber beyond, I did not know. But I did know that here, again, it was all my fault that he had entered. He had entered the corridor to find out, quite naturally, why old *Mohong* did not return to his guard duty; I had given instructions that I might call both him and old *Mohong;* and excited by those instructions, he had thought quite probably when old *Mohong* did not come out, that there might be some need for him, also, in my cave.

It was all my own fault, for by merely going to the left-hand entrance, I could have forestalled him. I could have kept him outside by simply telling him that old *Mohong* was on guard in the corridor and that he was supposed to perform the duties of both of them before the Elephant Stone.

But I had thought only to get rid of old *Mohong*. And he had seen me getting rid of old *Mohong!* His brow was knotted with bewilderment and incredulity now, his eyes beneath tightened into two thin gleaming

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lines of suspicion! For even at that moment, in the light from my bride's torch, he could see old *Mohong* trussed up like a ham at my feet!

I could not let him get away with the knowledge that we had made a prisoner of old *Mohong*. I feared he possessed, also, that more terrible knowledge—that the Green, Green God was in my cave! I would have to serve him as I had served old *Mohong*, make a pisoner of him, keep his knowledge, whatever it was, secure from the ears of the Poonan.

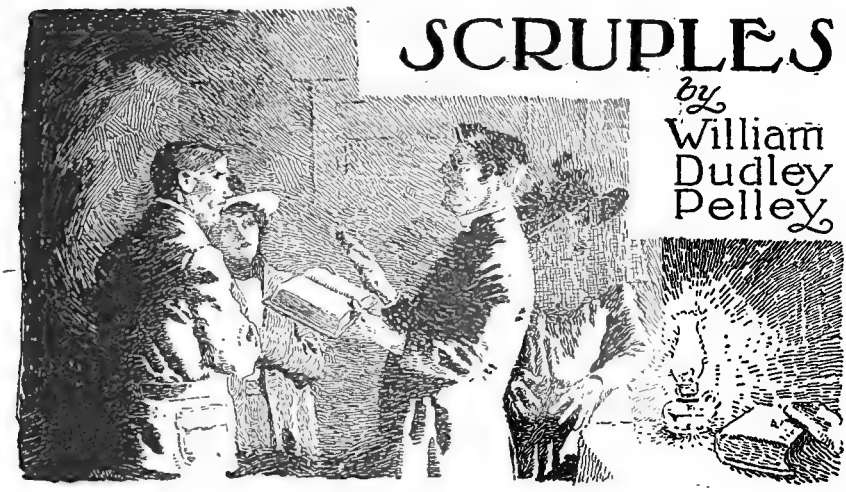
Swiftly I brushed past Golden Feather of Flame. She gave a little cry of fright at my startling action, but I did not halt. I could not halt. All in a moment, I was desperate to the edge of madness. I leaped at the Gunner. I leaped at the Gunner like a charging boar.

But even as I leaped at him, he saw in a flash my design. His Chinese eyes went wide with sudden fear of me.

"*Nda, nda, ndal*" he shouted shrilly.

And in panicky haste, he swung about and bounded for the entrance.

TO BE CONCLUDED



CROSS-LEGGED at the edge of the stable-door sat Hooty Malone. Down over the Montana foothills and mountains a gorgeous nature was dropping the curtain of evening.

The crag-like profile of the puncher and his concentrated attention was riveted on the mending of harness before him. Thus he failed to note the calico pony which arrived listlessly at the outer bars and from whose saddle a tall, thin, grim-visaged young man slid off, came to where the cowman was seated and stood watching him morosely.

Laying down the work to light the dead briar pipe, Hooty became aware of his audience.

"Waal," demanded Hooty, "what the Sam-Hill busted and dropped you down? And what's the matter with your mug? Look as though you'd lost your last friend."

"I have," confessed the arrival. "That is, except you—maybe." The young man in leathern leggings and smart Norfolk suit pulled off his big hat, sat down in the space beside Hooty and hid his face in both hands. "If I was a drinkin' man," he added, "I'd get uproariously, gloriously drunk."

"From which I gather," replied the puncher, "that you're in both love and trouble. There's just two times when mammon wants to get uproariously, gloriously drunk. One's when he's unmarried and lost her. The other's when he is married and would like to lose her. Commence. I'm listening."

"I didn't come up here," replied the other, "to rehearse any tale of wo. I'm on my way up to Smithson's, and Old King

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Cole asked if I'd leave one of these bills for you to tack up where the boys can see it."

Hooty wiped his hands on his trousers, shoved back his hat and took the folded poster.

"Another guy's beat it with bank funds, hey?" commented the huge foreman, reading the description. He mumbled it over half aloud:

"McDealer: Age thirty-five; weight one hundred and thirty; light-complexioned; blue eyes; deep scar resembling arrow-head on left shoulder."

Then he puffed several moments on the pipe.

"Why do those crooks always beat it for the wilderness?" he mused. "Why don't they stay in New York where they can get lost by movin' next door? Out here Jim Hawkes can't even go buckboard-ridin' with the red-headed girl without the whole county knowin' it—even to the personal column of the *Democrat*. Hot chance a feller's got bein' an air-space. How does the sheriff know he's 'round here?"

"Says he don't. Only when they saw the chap last he had bought a ticket for Denver. He took the train, got off at a jerk-water station and that's where they lost him. He's hiding somewhere in Wyoming, Montana or Idaho."

"Why not specify his location as 'North America' and have it over with? But to thunder with him, Jimmy. Tell me what's ailin' your map?"

"Women and money," vouchsafed the other.

"I don't get it. You don't mean the same old fuss has come up again over Susie and the will."

"Susie and the will," repeated the other glumly. "Only now there's the third party. The chap that got shot up on Pisgah. You remember. He was vacationin' at Susie's—and when they brought him in, resembling a human sieve, Susie promptly got in the Red Cross stuff and in other ways sat on his neck to hold him in the land of the living. So he gets in John Drew stunts over the arnica and babbles sonnets to her eyebrow while she's pumping in the gruel. Now she's gone plumb daft over him, Hoot. Guess I don't stand a show. He's got coin. That's the reason."

Hooty allowed his pipe to go out in his amazement.

"You mean to tell me, James M. Dean, that Susie Tucker, one of the best little girls that ever day-dreamed herself married to her favorite movie-actor, has gone over to this specimen of the civilized East—because he lights his pipe with dollar bills?"

"Not his pipe—his cigarette! And he talks in a 'tone o. voice,' quotes Browning as though it come natural, and demonstrates his eligibility by knowing that charmeuse isn't a wine or a French election district, but a brand of cheese."

"Brand of cheese, nothing!" retorted Hooty. "Charmeuse is a kind of lizard."

"Well, he's cinching her all right. It looks like the Holy Bonds of Scraperissimo because his relatives stole a bank, or a mine, or a railroad and have got so much coin they amuse themselves chucking it at him—like we used to pot saloon-lights before Harriman discovered us with a Public Service Commission and a gang of dagoes."

"Why don't you shake him?" grunted Hooty. "Shake him till he breaks out in a rash."

"Because he won't shake. Oh, it's the same old story, bo. Maybe I ought to taken Uncle Kelly's money after all. Women are all alike, Hoot. There's no more class to love in a cottage. A man sprung that dope on the universe. It's money they want. Love? Sure; but show me a feller that looks harmless, keeps his feet under the table, and in various other ways proves himself fit for a husband—and so long as he keeps his change loose in his trousers and always has the golden pants on him—she will manage to coddle him somehow. But honest, Hoot, I simply couldn't take that old skinflint's dough-bag—knowing how he made it. I couldn't enjoy a cent of it. Widows' mortgages and orphans' insurance—what fun would I have spending it? It was blood-money, Hoot. I know some folks think they're mighty funny scruples, but I'd rather be poor and feel I'd done right than have my paws dirtied up with the lucre and even keep the girl. I got my sheep farm, and I'm doing fairly good. But naturally I haven't got the coin that 'Spats' has got—and so I guess that cash will win again. It usually wins anything, from a love-affair to a European war."

"And that's why you're glum?"

"That's the reason."

"I wish it was my affair and my girl. Do you think somethin's that's left alive out here only because woman has the ballot

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would get away with my prospective sock-darner because he's got the thirty pieces of silver? Bah! You're degeneratin', Jimmy. Get wild and woolly and full of fleas. Boo this Percy off the map."

"No use, Hooty. My nerve's gone, maybe. I've tried to win back the girl every way I know that's honorable. But he'll take her back East—and what show's a Montana prairie got on the streets of Gath and Ascalon?"

"Then, you fool, if you ain't got the stomach to fight your own connubial battles, I'm goin' to do it for you."

The younger man beside him raised an eager face.

"Could you do it, Hoot? Could you send this powder-puff thing back East without taking Susie with him—take her attention off his folks' money-bags?"

"Jim, I've heard people—that'd probably sell their dead women folks for their hair—sayin' things behind your back about those scruples of yourn that riled me so the only thing that could cool me off was the universe."

"The universe?"

"Sure—plenty of outdoors to feel the breeze in and refrigerate. I ain't got any use for males whose business in life is hangin' 'round women in general. I want mine bloodthirsty and human. Gimme the man who'll even go to bed raw rather than put on a lady's night-dress. So I'll turn this job for you, Jim, and I'll turn it tonight—first, because I like your principles; second, because I ain't forgot how you caught my girl's pony the day he got away from her on the River road. Maybe it ain't none of my business, but you stick to your principles—always. I've found it pays. Now I'll prove it to another."

Saying which, the puncher took his pipe out, closed his jaw tightly and gave his friend a slap upon the shoulder that twitched his face in pain.

II

WHICH explains how, some two hours afterward, the big puncher sat with a ruddy-faced, athletic girl at the lower end of her father's pasture and watched a huge, complaisant moon loiter on a distant rocky mountain.

The girl shook her head.

"It's none of your business, Hooty," she advised. "Better let it alone. I know Susie. She's high-strung and proud. She's the kind of person, if you want to go south, you've got to face north. Try to keep her from the man she thinks she loves, and the least obstruction from outsiders would rivet her to his joys and sorrows like glue."

"That's all right, Bert," the puncher warmed up, "but I'm tellin' you this ain't an ordinary case. Up to an hour ago I thought this guy vacationin' down to Tuckers' was one of those rah-rah boys whose dissipation was bean-bag and sittin' up till nine o'clock. After I promised Jimmy to set his matrimonial tangle straight, I rode out to Tuckers' to size up the exhibit.

"But it warn't any Percy-boy I found, Bertha. He dresses like one, and maybe the only way he can manage to get rid of his money is by spendin' it. But one look into them cross-grained orbs of his and I saw a streak of yellow that Remington could tap and paint a sunset that'd put your eye out.

"Half-way up the Pisgah trail I overtook him. I stopped the nag square across his path. 'Look here,' says I, 'I'm a real peaceable chap, I am—and I stand for law and order. And this is a powerful sociable and law-abidin' little country out here,' says I, 'even if it is west of Eighth Avenue. So to avoid legal complications, I'm exertin' myself 'way off up here to tell you somethin'. You ain't wanted. Do you get it? I'll be polite enough to eloocidate.

" 'You recollect some weeks ago a fool lunatic took a shot at you on Pisgah. That warn't so bad, but you had to go and get well. And the antics of the heart you resurrected made your little nurse sort of lose interest in one Lochinvar that was raised 'round these parts and ain't yet had time to take his place in the poetry. That feller is a better man for her than you—because Susie ain't no Broadway firefly, and it ain't never been successfully did—the transplantin' of Montana sagebrush to a New York roof-garden. It don't grow healthy.

" 'So a few of Jim's friends respectfully requests that you fill air in the space you now occupy—and be ore tomorrow noon at that—and let Susie get over her financial infatuation with the help of the mountains, cañons and starlit nights we're in the habit of indulgin' in out here. And if you don't—there's tar and the stuffin' of eiderdown sleepin' arrangements waitin' for you in the

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Malliper lot at tomorrow's sunset, after which you'd barter your immortal soul for a tank of cologne and a pair of pants.'

"And do you know what he told me? He said somethin' that wised me in a jiffy that —well, the subject ain't mentioned in polite society, unless you're 'way up and given to philanthropy. All I can say is, take it from me, Bert—if Susie goes East she'll never come back West. And I'm afraid if us Western folks went East to find her—we'd be a long time huntin'."

"No!" exclaimed the girl.

"So I say, Bert, when I see a steer breakin' for timber I never rely on his early home trainin' to keep him unspotted from the world. I'm a great little philosopher, I am. But it soothes the gizzard and calms the soul to have a rope 'round my horn that'll tighten 'round the critter's wishbone and bring him back to the ways of his fathers. Take it from me straight, Bert, this little heifer of Jim's is breakin' for the timber and there's wolves out. Just leave it at that. There's wolves out. I'm for gettin' Susie at the end of a rope, the wolf at the end of my gun-barrel, and lettin' nature take its course."

The girl was impressed.

"You're *sure!*" she gasped.

"Positive, Bertha. And you know I ain't exactly what might be called a goer-off at the handle. I want you to get on your pony and canter down to Susie Tucker's tonight, Bert. Have a chin with Susie. No need for the riot act; just pass the time of day, the weather, the crops and the advice to the lovelorn in the Chicago papers. Hint about the honeymoon microbe stuff and the price of Beauty roses. Gradually settle, dank and soggy, on this Eastern social phenomenon, and the trouble that's brewin' for him tomorrow eve west of the Mississippi.

"If she's dreamy and teary and sort of floppin' up and down on the hymneal fence with Jimmy's clutch fairly good at her tail feathers, you can spring it on her what the boys'll do unless he's the livin' personification of the stuff that makes the heart grow fonder. But if she's real peppery and shows the whites of her eyes without sayin' much —like a four-legged devil that the saddle is goin' on for the first time—come back and tip me the word. We'll take action without waitin' the arrival of the Sunset Limited."

They returned to the house, the girl not only persuaded but thoroughly alarmed. Hooty tightened her bronco's girth and adjusted a stirrup.

"Yes," he said as he watched her lope away, "there's wolves about. But one hard-headed old ram is a tough nut for a wolf any day. And I always was considered a pretty good old butter-in. Besides that, when a man's got scruples and the courage to live up to 'em—so he loses his money and his girl—it's the dooty of the neighbors to rally 'round him and hoist the rattlesnake flag. Come on, horse. We got to live up to the religion of the foothills, son, by rememberin' we're our brother's keepers."

At a slower pace Hooty followed. His tawny mount took his own pace while the man made endless cigarettes and smoked them in passing peace with the night, his mission, and the great, vast West that surged about him and lost him in its heart.

At the place agreed upon, he waited. The minutes grew into an hour. His tobacco-bag at last became empty and he dropped it dubiously on the ground. And as he did, the night of adventure began.

III

UP THE trail came the girl's white horse, goaded to frantic fury.

Her hat was gone. She had lost her quirt. Long, beautiful black hair flew at her back and made of her a fantastic figure of the night.

Into the road she bounded, reined her animal to his haunches and wheeled him cruelly as she saw her man.

With a clutch at the lines of his own stampeding pony, the man who had been pacing the trail clapped a leg over the saddle and leaped forward to meet her.

"Hoot!" she cried, "they've eloped!"

"What?"

"Eloped! Skidaddled! Run away to get married!"

"How do you know?"

"Mrs. Tucker found a note five minutes before I came up. Susie said by the time she got it, they'd be married. Said she was leaving for the East 'with the man of her choice, because every woman has a right to happiness,' and a lot more foolish, sentimental stuff she saw somewhere in a novel. Tim's down to Sago, and Mis' Tucker's alone and prostrated. What'll we do? Susie

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mustn't marry that man. We got to stop them somehow——"

"You're darned right! We got to stop them somehow." The big puncher was very cool and sarcastic in emergencies. "Eloped with him, has she? The white-livered coyote couldn't bear to think of spoilin' a perfectly good feather bed. Ma Tucker any idea how long they been gone?"

"She said Davidson came up quick and excited from his walk, an hour ago. He called Susie up and she heard him mention your name."

"Yes," drawled the puncher, "I really did tell him a little stronger line of conversation than I repeated to you, Bert."

"Ma Tucker didn't pay much attention when things quieted down. She went over to Sprague's. Half an hour after—that was a half an hour ago—she saw the two on their horses take the Dingle Road. She thought they were taking his daily constitutional together. When she came back she found the note. Oh, don't sit there so quiet. You make me mad! What'll we do! Say something!"

Hooty held his nervous horse down and thought a moment.

"Headed for the Dingle, hey? That means Parson Shephard. He's the only one to marry 'em this time of night. I bet my gun on it. And he's just sentimental enough to abet such a ruckus, especially if his nibs stuck a gun under his nose. We're four miles from the Dingle Trail. It's eight more to Shephard's. That's twelve. There's only one way left to stop 'em, Bert. The question is: Are you game?"

"I'm game for anything. I'm mad clean through. I'd ford Mustang River to stop this thing. Poor old Ma Tucker. You ought to have seen her poor old work-hardened hands holding the apron to her eyes."

"And that," said Hooty, "is exactly what I was goin' to propose—Mustang River."

A sharp intake of breath came from the girl, for she had said the words in bravado.

"It's twelve miles from here to Shephards' by the road. If we turn off here, cut through the brush, hit the river by the Point at the north cañon, we come out a mile above the Dingle. It's a nasty ride and a treacherous ford. But the moon is high, and the case is desperate. What do you say?"

The girl's face was white. Her lips were grimly set. But there was no hesitation in the thing he asked her to do.

"To the end of the world with you, Hoot!" she cried. Her horse gave a neck-breaking bound. She was down in the brush and still dropping lower.

The puncher stopped only for a cry of admiration. Then after her fantastic figure he followed.

Down the steep they galloped and fell. The rains had washed great crevices in the earth where their horses stumbled and staggered. The brush looked unreal and weird. At the risk of his neck and the limbs of his horse, the puncher tore on ahead to keep the woman from taking too great chances to equal the grit of the man that she loved.

It was a steep, treacherous, nerve-racking slide. Then suddenly before them stretched the broad, deep, rapid current of the river, five hundred feet to the other side.

Hooty cried above the swirl of the water: "You can turn back if you want to, Bert. It ain't a job for a girl like you——"

But the girl was flogging her horse to make him take to the water.

"Shut your face and drive in!" she cried. "Where my man goes, I go too." And like a gigantic cork, with a flounder of spray, her horse had left his footing and was bobbing in the current.

For an instant Hooty wavered at the risk in the thing they were doing. But immediately he was too engrossed in keeping himself upright to worry over the chances. He saw her, a struggling, spray-splashed mass on the moonlit water. Then his own bronco struggled in the current and he lost her for a moment.

Dripping, shivery and cold, their horses at last bore them up the eastern bank.

"We cut off eleven miles," declared the puncher when they stood up on the trail again and looked back on the river through which they had come. "The question is: Have they made it before us? I don't think so. Spats couldn't ride a Western horse that far that quick."

A peculiar formation of country lay about them. The trail where they stood came eleven miles round the base of the mountain, then turned still lower into the gigantic hair-pin curve that below them formed the Dingle. The moonlight was very plain on mountain, foot-hill, valley and water. Very plainly, too, they made out the shining roof of the pastor's house.

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The girl's pony shook his dripping coat of water, champed his bit and gazed suddenly with pointed ears over the night.

"We ain't missed calculations any, Bert. They're comin' sure as death and Prohibition. And I bet Spats has blisters on his legs big as toy balloons and juicy as melons."

The puncher drew his gun from his belt. His face was very grim in the moonlight.

"I don't relish this job, Bert, not by a jugful. But if this feller ain't incited to obey orders I'm goin' to take him to pieces to see what makes him tick——"

"Hooty, is this the best place to intercept them? You might frustrate them now, but wouldn't they try it again? If the girl loves him, she'd join him 'if he was in Borneo or East St. Louis.' I would! Can't you dig up a scheme for killing her infatuation right now—show up his yellow streak or something?"

"Bert, I ain't come no dare-devil, nightmare mile and got this saddle all stiff again without knowin' why I come and what I'm goin' to do. As soon as we make sure it's them comin', we dive off here and make another drop into the Parson's back yard. It'll take them twenty minutes to circle round the tail-loop in the trail. I'm goin' to turn in there. But you ain't, Bert. You're goin' to keep right on. Go on two miles more—up through Woodford Hollow and hit the edge of Buster Cameron's ranch on the northeast. Cut through number nine hill and hit the road. Go bring——"

"Hush!" the girl commanded. "That's them! You're talking too loud. They'll hear!"

So Hooty whispered the name of the man he wanted and wanted quickly.

"And you?" she asked.

"Me? I'm goin' to bust into Parson Shephard's, and when they arrive, Hooty'll receive 'em. In fact—I'm goin' to marry 'em!"

"Marry them!"

"Sure, marry them! Leave it to me to kill time doin' it until you go and get back with your party. It won't be bindin' anyhow, and the main thing is to get the man there that wants to see Davidson so urgently."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"I mean," said the puncher, "what I mean!"

There was grim mystery in the puncher's face and tone. The girl was perplexed, but she obeyed.

In silent comradeship she wheeled her animal and cuffed him with the wet and heavy reins. Away she went again — a swaying, swashing fantasy, down the sagebrush.

IV

THE Reverend Alan Shephard was a capital cartoon of the Common People. He was short, small, bald, mutton-chopped and perpetually horrified. Doubly the latter when a furious avalanche of horse slid into his rear yard and his rider catapulted against the kitchen door.

Clad in trousers and undershirt, with huge knobs of stocking sticking up at each great toe, he padded into the kitchen and encountered the puncher as the latter shot in the door and banged it shut behind him.

"What's the matter?" demanded the astounded little minister.

Hooty stopped for a moment to get his breath.

"Listen," he commanded. "You know Jim Tucker's girl Susie? Well, she's elopin'. Understand? Running away to get married. They're comin' here, and they've nearly arroved. Bertha and me beat 'em to it, cuttin' across Mustang River at the Point. Bert's gone on for a party the chap she's runnin' away with won't be pleased to meet."

"Who is he?"

"The feller that calls himself Davidson—the feller that's been boardin' at her father's."

"Why are you interfering?"

"Because that girl belongs to Jimmy Dean, Parson. He's stealin' Jimmy's property as much as if he run his hand in Jimmy's safe. Jim's a pal of mine, and I've sworn to see this cheese-faced crook crimped in his getaway. There's only one way to do it. I've got to kid 'em along till Bertha gets back. And I got to do it in a way that won't stampede Susie. It's a delicate situation, but believe me, I'm some little John Hay. To do it, I want to change places with you. I'm goin' to marry 'em."

"You're going to *what?*"

"Splice 'em; give 'em the double-cinch; deal 'em the 'Promise Me——' "

"But you're not a minister."

"You pious-mugged mariner to the Rock of Ages! Can't you see it's only a stall to

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gain time? When Bertha gets back we're goin' to give that fly in Montana's matrimonial butter a showin'-up that'll bring the girl back to Jimmy like she was hitched to a rubber-band." Briefly Hooty sketched Jimmy's story and outlined the character of the man with whom the girl was eloping. "Now this mongrel has flashed a wad on Susie that'd bring Hetty Green west on a flat car, and between the wad and the romance of it, he's got the girl locoed. They'll be here in exactly three minutes. Cauliflower can't ride very fast because the saddle has already shaped him like a human wish-bone and if he puts on more speed, it'll cleave him to the gullet. I want a collar, a coat and a pair of glasses."

"But I haven't a coat that will fit you."

"I'd climb into Cæsar's toga, daggers and all, before I'd let this wart on the face of nature get away with this job. Tote out the best you've got—and if you flap a clapper durin' the obsequies, I'll see your clappers hung on the outer walls for the rest of your natural existence."

It took two valuable minutes to convince the reluctant preacher of the grim necessity for the thing in hand, and two more valuable minutes for him to remember a coat, vest and collar of a consumptive who had died the Summer previous at his home.

Hooty swore the collar into place and drew the vest on backward. When he had pulled on the coat his clerical appearance was astounding. He lit a candle and smoked up the parson's glasses with carbon from the flame while the aghast little man groaned and sputtered to no purpose.

"Now gimme the book you read 'em the riot act from," said he. "Quick! I hear their horses in the yard."

Soft thuds of hoofs sounded without. Muffled voices were borne in through the window screens. A timid knock sounded on the front hall door.

"Duck!" whispered Hooty hoarsely. "And stay ducked. You're dead, sick, fallen down a gully—understand? I'm comin' on as the presidin' elder, keepin' this religious joint open in your absence. Here's where my perfectly good two years wasted in Pawnee College comes in handy for the once and only time in my life. I could almost be a real presiding elder if it wasn't that vile contamination with the cow country's cañons and foothills beats book theology all hollow. I hate to talk this way to a parson, but this here is a life and death matter."

"The girl will recognize you," wailed the little minister, "she surely will!"

"She will not. I ain't met Susie Tucker two and a half times in my mortal existence. She'd hardly know me—except by name—if she met me sittin' on a steer's head with the Bar Seventy brandin'-iron in one hand and the critter's feelin's in the other."

"Mr. Shephard!" cried the girl on whom he opened the door a moment later. "We want Mr. Shephard!"

The altered cowman concealed his voice about as effectually as a high-school valedictorian in a board-walk town.

"Aw—yaas," he replied. "But Mr. Shephard ain't to home. He's gone over the mountain to fix a road."

"Fix a road! At this time of night?"

"Yaas. Doc Adler, the atheist, was reported low and his trail between here and the New Jerusalem ain't all it should be. So Parson Shephard has——"

"Perhaps," broke in the girl's companion, "you think that's funny. And who are you?"

"I'm the new presiding elder. I'm examinin' the parson's books to see he ain't blowed his collections on wine, woman or song."

The slang, which the cowman could not entirely eradicate from his vocabulary, despite his college attempt seven years earlier, might have given the misrepresentation away had not the girl been too nervous and excited to take note.

"If you're a presiding elder, you must be a minister too. You'll do as well as Mr. Shephard."

"Sure," said Hooty. "I'm game for anything. And the sky's the limit. Was it on a christenin', marriage or funeral you wished my services, ma'am?"

"We want to get married right away!" cried the frantic girl. "We'll pay you anything, won't we, Gussy?"

"Gussy!" the puncher shrieked to himself. "Wow!" Then he said aloud: "Sure I'll marry you. At marryin' I'm a regular humdinger. Back East I was known as the 'Marryin' Parson.' I married everybody in town but one old maid. She wouldn't take a chance nohow. Held that all flesh is grass, and if she got gathered into the silo ahead of him he might marry another woman."

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"Yes, yes!" cried the girl. "But let us in. You can't marry us here in the dark."

"I could marry you," declared Hooty, "in any place from a lion's cage to a public bar. Only the moonlight's romantic. You say lots in the moonlight you'd never think of sayin' in the day."

Hooty got a light and led them into the parlor.

"I presume," said he, "you've got the license."

"I have the license," the man replied sullenly.

He threw it on the table.

The puncher wasted all the time possible in its examination.

"Yaas," he declared gravely. "The penmanship could be improved. But after a couple of years you won't mind that."

"Look here!" demanded the bridegroom. "What kind of preacher are you, anyhow?"

"Young man," retorted the puncher, "do you expect a preacher that's married a townful, to take matrimony seriously? I like to make young folks feel at ease. I want them to feel they got their money's worth."

"Marry us, and shut up!" the man declared.

"And just to make 'em feel they've had their money's worth I used to tote out a cake, back home. Sorry I can't do it tonight because Mrs. Shephard ain't cooked for a week. But there's a can of crullers we can dive into afterward——"

"Hurry with this agony," Davidson groaned.

Having wasted all time possible examining the license, the puncher straightened up and sighed.

"Well, stand up and look pleasant. I'm sorry you ain't taking gas. It would only cost a dollar more and be so much less painful——"

"Come on, girl," ordered the man. He turned on Hooty. "Who have you got for a witness?"

INWARDLY Hooty groaned. Here was a poser. He had forgotten the need of a witness.

"Well," he stammered, "I'm alone, worse luck." Then a bright idea hit him. He could gain still more time. "But I tell you what I'll do. Seein' there ain't no witness, suppose I let you have the marriage for half-price——"

"——!" swore the man. "What kind of foolery is this, anyhow?"

The girl trembled on the verge of tears. What he was doing smote the big puncher's heart. But it had to be done.

"I have it," he cried. "I'll get a witness. Wait here a moment."

His idea had been suggested by the head and shoulders of the frantic little minister hanging two feet out the bedroom door.

Into the room strode Hooty and closed the door very softly and tightly.

"Listen," said he. "Parson, you got to be a witness."

"But they'll know me."

"Not on your tin-type they won't. Because you got to come on as a lady."

"As a——" Speech utterly failed the little man. Queer inarticulate sounds denoting indignation and anger escaped his larynx.

"Fiddle!" roared Hooty. "I promised 'em a witness, and I'll get 'em a witness. We ain't got time to argue. Pull down some skirts and bonnets. Present yourself, coy and shy, at the altar of matrimony. If you don't, I swear I'll come back after this job is over and douse your reverend head under the pump. I hate to speak light of sacred things, but preventin' this match is a dummed-sight more sacred than your ordination. Snake out some female coat-tails. Snake 'em out quick!"

"I will not!" retorted the sizzling little man. "I shall expose this blasphemous outrage at once!"

He got no further, for the big paw of the puncher had closed round his neck and was forcibly putting the soft pedal on his shrill vocal volume.

There is no time in the narrative for the puncher's admonitions. At the end of five minutes the little man was kind, gentle and fit for a lady to drive.

"But my whiskers!" cried the little man. "I can't play lady in these whiskers."

Hooty scratched his head; made a wry face.

"You might come on as the bearded lady," said he. "This is a circus anyhow. But you're right. They won't do. You've got to hang a portière in front of that mug."

He pawed around in the bedroom closet and pulled down a veil. He clapped a

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woman's Winter hat on the minister's head and slung the veil over it, while the little man coiled a skirt on the floor like a lassoo and stepped within.

Shy and coy enough for the most exacting —or its equivalent in terror—a very astounding lady presented herself at the parlor door.

"I went up the road," explained Hooty, "but all I could get was Boffield's cook. She had a tilt with her husband last night, and didn't want to come. He blacked her eye. But I told her she needn't take off her hat nor duds."

The subdued lamp-illumination and the nervous fright that possessed both of them, though perhaps for widely different reasons, still held the remarkable fraud together.

"All right," snapped Davidson. "Get your book, and get busy."

Hooty opened the ritual. But immediately a qualm seized him. For it was filled with solid minion type, without headings or indicatory marks of any kind.

"This is a strange book," the puncher declared as he thumbled it frantically. "If I had my own, I could go whizzin'. I'll have to look in the index. Let's see." He ran his finger down the table of contents. "'Communion; Morning Prayer; Services for First and Second Sunday.' That ain't what we're after. What's this? 'Love Feast.' That ought to be weddin' stuff. Page twenty-six."

He turned to page twenty-six, having hard work to read through the aperture for purposes of vision which he had been careful to wipe on each lens.

"Nope!" he snorted. "This ain't what we're after. This is about eatin' bread and water at six in the mornin'. Marriage is bread and water, all right. But I don't see where the six o'clock rings in—unless some fool is crazy enough over matrimony to tackle it that early. Hold on! Here we have it. 'Ritual for the Ceremony of Holy Marriage.' That's us. Page forty."

The puncher arranged them carefully, as if they were posing for their photographs. He went back to his book, picked it up clumsily, cleared his throat, and began in a loud voice—

"Dust to dust,
Ashes to ashes——"

A wild gurgle broke from the witness.

"You turned over a page. That's the funeral service you're reading."

"What do you know about it?" demanded Davidson.

"Cheer up!" boomed Hooty. "What if it is? You don't need to get sore about it. You're bein' operated on, anyhow. Let me get the right page. We'll try again."

But he met with no better success than before. For after poking his face as near the light as he dared, the book slipped from his hand, and when he had found the supposed place again he coughed and began the astounding declaration—

"Unto us a child is born!"

"Sufferin' cats!" swore the bridegroom. "We ain't here to bury no relatives; nor christen any kids; nor lay no corner-stones. I'm gettin' sick of this mess. Give me your book. I'll find the ritual."

"I've found it," announced Hooty. "Grab her lunch-hook and hang on.

"'Dearly beloved brethren,'" the cowman began. "There ain't no brethren here," he declared aside, "but I don't care if we've got the ritual for sweepin' out the vestry; I've fiddled 'round in this menu long enough, and you got to stand for it.

"Dearly beloved brethren, we are met that this man and this woman may be joined in the holy bonds of wedlock as decreed by the Creator, the laws of Montana, the idiosyncrasies of Sago City, and the ignorance of the female conspirator that don't know when singleness is bliss 'tis folly to be wives."

"Is that in your book?" demanded the bridegroom, "or are you makin' it up?"

"What's the difference, anyhow? You're bein' married. Shut up!

"The Creator Himself hath said, it is not good for man to live alone. There ain't no class to his comin's and goin's, he makes a public dump of his lodgin's——"

"Did the Creator say that?" demanded the man.

"Never you mind what the Creator said. You cock an ear to what *I'm* sayin'!

"So He hath made for him a helpmeet, a partner for his sorrows and his joys, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, that in everything the male department is, shall she be able to imitate, even his job and his vote unto the third and fourth generation——!"

In his anxiety to include in the service what was not there and thus make it as verbose and time-taking as possible, the puncher had overstepped himself.

With utter disregard for the solemnity of

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the occasion, the bridegroom leaned over and examined very intently something beneath the witness.

With dramatic silence he very slowly lifted the hem of the witness's skirt.

TWO huge, shoeless feet were disclosed to view—the knobs of stocking sticking from each great toe like points on skiis, and the bony ankles enclosed in a pair of pants.

"I thought so!" snarled the bridegroom. "This whole darned thing is a hoax!"

He snatched at the heavy black veil and tore it aside.

The horrified face of the little minister gasped blankly at the intruder, his shaven poll sticking from the women's regalia with startling resemblance to a turtle who has found himself unable to get his head back in his shell.

"Mister Shephard!" gasped the girl, and fainted.

"And who are you?" roared Davidson.

He turned on Hooty. He turned to look into the undisguised, steady resolute eyes of the cow-puncher of a few hours before—and into the barrel of a deadly weapon whose muzzle resembled the entrance to a tunnel.

"Now," declared Hooty, "the game's up. But I've done the thing I wanted to do. I've killed the time necessary for Bertha to do her errand."

The bridegroom's face blanched white.

"What errand?" he said weakly.

"Davidson," said Hooty coldly, "I got a hunch there's a guy in this county lookin' for you."

The last vestige of blood left the eloper's face. The strength seemed to leave him also. He clutched at the table for support.

"No!" he cried.

"Yes," retorted the other. "What's more, you're goin' to sit here, nice and ladylike, and wait for him—or I'm goin' to hammer you into a cross between a porous-plaster and a length of stair-carpet."

"Don't!" cried the man hoarsely. His face became pasty. He supported himself frantically to keep from crumpling in a sudden terror. "Let me go! Let me go! I'll make it right with you. I'll pay you anything!"

The girl had recovered from her faint. She sat up on the sofa where the little minister had pushed her like a lawn-mower. With livid face and parted lips, she ran, stumbled to her lover.

"Gussy!" screamed the girl.

"Get out of the way!"

"What have you done? What does Hooty mean?"

"Get out of the way, —— you! You got me into this trap." He shoved the girl aside and caught at the puncher's belt. "Let me go," he pleaded hoarsely. "It ain't anything to you. If it's the girl you want, take her. But let me go——"

"Sound nice, don't they — those hoof-beats? Hear 'em gettin' louder?"

Outside, sudden hoof-beats shifted to soft, pithy thuds as horses galloped into the yard and came to a pawing stop.

The man, still covered by the gun, backed to the opposite wall.

"I swear I ain't got it!" he screamed. "I didn't mean to do it. Don't turn me over to the sheriff. Don't send me back!"

"Who said anything about a sheriff?" demanded the suddenly astonished puncher.

Then his jaw sagged. Bringing it back into grim resolution, he strode across the room, seized the stranger's arm and wrenched it sharply. The man howled in pain, but the coat was off and another strip bared his arm to the shoulder.

Footsteps came on the soft pine porch. The front door opened. Into the room walked two people. One was Hooty's Bertha. The other was Jimmy Dean.

V

"WHAT in ———!" were the only words that James M. Dean could utter.

He gazed on a strange tableau.

A craven-faced man, one shoulder bare of clothing, was backed against the opposite wall, held there by the business end of a six-shooter. On the floor, sobbing hysterically, sat the girl he loved with her face hidden in the most astounding female concoction that ever was too intellectual to care about her clothes—and looked it. Gradually, despite the weapon in his vitals, the strengthless man sagged to the floor.

"Get up!" commanded Hooty.

The girl at the minister's feet raised her streaming face. She was a smashingly pretty girl, and the audience scarcely knew for the instant which was most eloquent, her face or her words.

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She raised herself, faltered to the puncher's side.

"Whoever you are, and whatever you're doing this for—please—don't!"

Hooty looked down into the tear-wet face. For ten full seconds he studied the misery eloquent on the beautiful features.

Then he didn't.

"Sorry, Jimmy," he said at length, "that Bert had to bring you so far. But there's somethin' here you can attend to better'n me. The girl here needs you, Jim. Maybe she don't know it yet. But she'll come 'round in a minute."

The hopelessness of a few hours previous had gone from the tall young man's face at the scene before him. Now it was very grim and deadly. He took off the big hat and tossed it on a chair. His eyes narrowed to slits. His fists corded.

"Hold on, Jim! I'm boss here. Possession is nine points of the law and I had this chap first. Skunk! Get up!"

Davidson got up. His face was now a sickly yellow.

"Stay where you are," ordered Hooty as he laid the gun on the table. "If you break and run, I'll shoot. Bertha, take Susie out—and shut the door."

"What are you goin' to do?"

"I'm goin' to do the thing I started to do 'way back up on the Tucker trail tonight—before we made the ford. I'm goin' to fix this chap so he lets Susie alone for good."

Bertha led the weeping girl away.

The four men were alone in the room.

"Now," began Hooty, facing the prisoner, "we'll end this business quickly." He took off the ministerial regalia, unbuttoned his shirt and from an inside pocket therein produced a plain envelope. "After my talk with Jimmy tonight, I prepared myself with this. Only I didn't think I was goin' to use it for some days, and after I'd properly fixed the scenery. You've rushed the thing by this marriage stunt tonight."

Hooty's long fingers felt inside the envelope.

"Out here in Montana," began Hooty, "we've got a higher code with women-folks than you slimy, crawlin' things of the East. We don't steal girls in the night and marry 'em on false pretenses. But we'll let that pass. This here deal is man to man. And when I say 'man' I'm supposin' you to be—not what you are—but the kind of men we are in Montana. I'm takin' you at your face value—understand?

"Good! All right—now you want this girl and Jimmy wants this girl. We'll lay aside the first right to the property and we'll put through a deal between men. We'll consider that she's property, nothin' more. Jimmy and I will buy this girl from you and do it now. We don't say you got to accept. We're simply makin' you a proposition. You set your price, what you think she's worth. If we can, we'll pay it. But the one condition to go with the bill of sale is this: You give your word along with your receipt for her—that you're done with her, that you don't come back and try to possess her, or spirit her off from afar no more than as if she was critter-beef that we bought at a ten-spot a hoof. That's Jimmy's and my proposition in a nutshell. You sign a receipt for cash we pay for her—your interest in her is done."

"And I go where I please?"

"You go where you please. It's none of our business where you go. We'll be absolutely on the level, so long as you are on the level too. Come on, now! How much for the woman?"

Davidson blinked incredulously from one to the other. Then his face resolved into a smirk. He gathered up his torn shirt-sleeve and got back into his coat. He brushed himself off very deliberately and set his hat at a jaunty angle. Then he flipped out a cigarette-case and lighted a coffin-nail to steady his quaking nerves.

"How much'll you offer?" he demanded.

"How much is she worth to you?"

"That depends how you look at it."

"Your way."

Davidson examined his cigarette-ash.

"One thousand dollars," he said at a venture. His crafty eyes shot quickly from one face to the other to note the effect of the "feeler."

With difficulty Hooty restrained the boy beside him from springing at the would-be bridegroom's throat.

"Done!" exclaimed Hooty. "Cheap enough! There's a blank receipt. Make it out—to Hooty Malone. And—there's your money."

Out of the envelope Hooty flipped a thousand-dollar bill and laid it on the table. With popping eyes the two men stared upon it.

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"You're crazy!" gasped Jimmy Dean. "That's phony money."

"I'll leave it to Davidson," drawled Hooty, "if it's phony money. He ought to be able to tell."

Despite his pasty features, at the inference the other flushed deeply. He picked up the bill, laid it down again.

"I'll take the chance," he said.

"A pencil receipt will do," said Hooty. "Write it!"

Davidson bent over the table and scribbled the receipt. It was a queer and startling document.

Sago City, Montana, August 25, 19—
Received from H. Malone, one thousand dollars in full payment for one girl, Susie Tucker.
G. Davidson.
Witness, J. M. Dean.

He handed it to Hooty.

As the puncher reached over his hand, the door opened.

Into the room walked Susan Tucker. Her tears were gone. Her fine-chiseled white face was stony. Very proudly, very witheringly she walked across before the two men and held open the outer door. Returning, she was just in time to close a hand, icy cold, over the puncher's, proffering the money.

"No!" she said. She took the mammoth bank-note in her steady grip herself. Then with her slender nostrils twitching and her deep eyes flashing fire, she looked her fellow-eloper in his shifting eye.

"That isn't quite necessary, Mr. Malone," she said. Then she choked in her withering wrath. "Get out! Go! You—you—Thing!"

VI

OUT in the wonderful night, Hooty and his girl rode homeward together.

"Hooty," she said after a quarter-hour of silence, "where did you get that money?"

"I borrowed it from Pop Whitney and staked it on a wager."

"What was the wager?"

"That Susan was a Montana girl—true Western."

"You never intended to give that bill to Davidson?"

"I knew I would never have to do it—if Susan heard. That was the wager."

"And if she hadn't, you would have lost the money."

"No. Do you remember once on the River Road your bronco got away—and—Jimmy helped you?"

"Yes."

"I would only have been payin' back Jimmy. But I'd have done it anyhow, because I like Jim's principles."

"Well, anyway," said the girl, "they're married."

"Yes," agreed Hooty, "they're married."

After a long time the girl said:

"Do you know the first thought I had when I saw you holding that man against the wall?"

"What?"

"That he was the chap Old King Cole, the sheriff, has placarded all over the county."

Hooty laughed.

"Whatter you think we are," he demanded, "workin' in a magazine story?"

VII

THE following afternoon Hooty alighted before Sheriff Cole's office and strode thoughtfully within.

"King," said he, "you're sort of a court feller, ain't you? You serve subpœnas. That is, when you hand a fellow a paper he's got to take it."

"Such," said the sheriff, "is my business."

"Waal, I got a paper here for Jimmy Dean. He was married last night to Susie Tucker—at my incitin'. And his sheep-ranch is covered with mortgages as thick as the face of a widder's kid with freckles. If he had wanted to take that money bled from furniture loans and orphans he could now be hittin' the high-bumps at forty-flat. He couldn't do it, and the worldly wise of Sago County lighted verbally on his neck. I've been maintainin' he'd come out all right. As usual — doin' penance for his scruples—he has. This envelope is it. You got to serve it on him subpœna-like. Make him take it."

"What's in it?"

"A piece of paper — a thousand-dollar bill. I received it this noon in a letter. Never mind who it come from. We'll say it come from the gods, where all rewards come from to them as follows their scruples. But you deliver it. Make a speech. Say: 'The gods want you should keep on livin'

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up to your scruples, and here's a weddin' present for doin' it so far. It'll make your honeymoon as financially painless as possible.' "

"Hooty," demanded the sheriff, "is this your money?"

"It is not. It's an entirely different thousand-dollar bill than the neighbors tell I flashed at the parson's house last night. I swear it come from the gods—for Jimmy."

Abruptly, then, the puncher left the astounded sheriff. Two minutes later outside the pretentious Palace Hotel bar he stopped. He strode to the curb before he entered, took a letter from his shirt and read it for the fifteenth time:

MALONE:

I'm not much on this thankee ma'am stuff, so what I want to say can be short and sweet.

You're the only man that knows. You knew last night. And I knew you knew when you opened the door decently and let me go.

No one ever treated me like that before Maybe if they had I wouldn't be where I am today.

So just because you did me the biggest turn in a pinch I ever heard of, I'm sending you enclosed what you deliberately sacrificed by opening the door.

I'm going somewhere and try to live straight. Where, no one knows but myself, so there's no sending this money back. Man to man—I'm leaving it to you to keep silent.

That's all.

"I can't take money that war'n't come honestly by," the puncher muttered to himself. "Especially when I stood by Jimmy for not doin' it. And yet I wonder if I let him go because I was a white man and his trouble was none of my business—or to save compromisin' the bride?"

Very carefully he tore the letter in tiny pieces. One by one they fluttered down to the gutter.

"A white man or the woman?" he concluded. "Well, where's the difference?"

The last piece of paper fell to the street. The puncher went into the bar. The noon sun beat down on the paving, and an hour later one bright, legible fragment still faced the cloudless sky.

It was the afternoon sprinkling-cart that obliterated the writing—closed the adventure.

For the one word on the fragment was the signature.

It was signed, "McDealer."

The Spark of Adventure

By Richard Butler Glaenzer

THE spark of adventure is in us all;
For see it flash at the roll of a drum;
Some of us leap to its fiery call,
Others would snuff it with haw and hum.
But it burns unquenched from first to last,
Breath of our sires of the roaming past.

North . . . South . . . East . . . West!
Which is unstained by our fathers' blood?
And the deepest dyed denies us rest,
Though we feign content with our peaceful cud.
Man's body may follow the prosiest grooves,
But boundless the world where his spirit moves.

Though we breed our children soft as mush—
Watch their eyes when they listen to tales
Of travel and war. A hundred flush
With ardor to one, if one, who pales.
We may bind our bodies with shackles of gold,
But the spark of adventure can not be sold!

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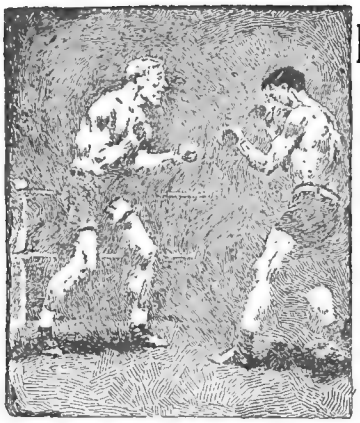

BILLY BLAIN'S ONIONS AND GARLIC

by Walter Galt

Author of "The Return of Billy Blain," "Dorg's Luck," etc.

IF HIS venture into the automobile business had been answerable for Billy Blain's resumption of the championship, it must be held responsible as well for certain other things.

For instance, there was Mrs. Blain's altered view of ring fights and the "tainted money" that went with them or exuded from them. She found herself admitting that her old antagonism to the fight game had been chiefly due to her mistrust of Fortune, and her fear that Billy might prove loser.

Business—keeping the books and signing checks for O'Hanlon, Blaine & Co.—had taught her more regard for money and less contempt for such of it as might seem "easy" to the casual looker-on. And not only had she come to know the lure of dollars, but she had learned as well how much sweeter is the taste of a champion's fame than the would-be-sweets of climbing into would-be good society.

As an aspirant for social distinction in the eighty-dollar Harlem neighborhood, she had been forced to confess herself, if not a failure, at the most but a middling success. Suddenly now, as the wife of the man who was champion again, she discovered that the honors of the welterweight division were loaded on herself, and the doors that she had thought were so "respectable"—that had been closed against her scheming and all her surreptitious knocks—were open wide.

Harlem, it seemed, loved fighting men who fought and won, and had more regard for their wives than for women whose husbands were mere "business men." The money, and the glamour, and the disillusionment were—three combined—too many for her.

She began to flaunt her honors openly, and to wear a forty-dollar hat that less than a year ago she would have denounced as sporty. She found herself dispensing favors instead of seeking them—shutting her door to "climbers" instead of clambering herself—arbitrating now, in her turn, on the fate of ill-advised ones who dared break the social rules invented by herself. (They make stricter rules in Mrs. Billy's part of Harlem than they do in Mayfair or on Fifth Avenue.)

It was Billy Blain, in these later prosperous days, who did the hanging back, and who argued and proved awkward to convince. It was he, now, who remembered former diatribes of hers, and told her that the ring was no good, no class, no anything but rotten and degrading. It was he who wanted to be quit of it, and Mrs. Billy who urged him openly and brazenly to take his pick from among the challenges that rained on him by every mail.

"Go in and hammer the heads off them, Billy boy!" she insisted. "Put them to sleep, one by one, and pocket the money. Make a good killing before we quit for good!"

That was outrageous advice from such a little Puritan as Mrs. Billy; it was the opposite, even of Billy's own attitude in the early, hard-bitten days, for the money had always been a secondary consideration with him. The little chap had a heart in him that would not let him fail, and it was the

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winning fights that mattered—not the money value of them. That was why he had always won.

Now Mrs. Billy's attitude began to tell on him, for he loved her, thought her still the wisest woman in the world; he began to waver in his resolution to avoid the customary aftermath of championship; he began to listen longer and more patiently to the money argument. And Terence O'Hanlon —growing wiser as the hair above his forehead thinned and his red beard whitened—shook his head.

" 'Tis sorry I am to see and listen," he would grumble to himself. "From Samson down, there's not been a fighting-man that wasn't ruined, sooner or later, by a woman; and it's his turn next! She helped him so far, but that's the way with women. She means well; but that's their way again—they're as apt to mean well as not.

"That little man 'ud be safer with the other kind; he'd set his teeth and beat the game. No crooked woman would have the slightest chance with him. But he believes in Mrs. Billy, and he'll listen to her; and I'm—I'm afraid. And he'll win a fight or two, and win a pile o' money, and then lose, and end licked. I'd rather he'd be poorer, and me poorer, and him unbeaten champion retired! So'll he and Mrs. Billy wish it, when the time comes."

O'Hanlon's soliloquies were apt to be wiser than he ever was when he was actually called on for real advice and it was seriously needed. So when the question arose as to whether Billy should accept the challenge of "Young Jim Mace" or not, Terence's voice was on the "yea" side with the others. Like them, he was carried away by the obvious ease of "cleaning up a piece of easy money."

"YOUNG JIM MACE," he recollected, probing the recesses of his memory that included all pugilistic data of a lifetime and was astonishingly up to date, "is a Wop, born in Genoa and raised in the district below Fourteenth Street. Brought over, he was, when he was a nipper, two or three years old; and since he bit his mammy he hasn't hurt much yet.

"He learned scrapping, of a sort, as a sort of hanger-on and handy-man to the Gas House Gang; and like the rest of 'em, he'd chew nails when the gang's by — handy. Get him alone, and he'd shed tears if you looked at him. He'll throw a great, big bluff in Round One, and you'll get near enough to him perhaps to hit him once. Round Two, you'll have to follow him 'round and 'round the ring, and the first punch that catches up with him finishes the fight. Then he'll go back to the gang and brag about the coin he got for lying down! He's easy!"

"What has he done in the ring, so far?" asked Billy, who knew that the Italian must have beaten quite a few men before O'Hanlon would even let the challenge reach him. Besides, he had a hazy recollection of the name.

"He's beaten about a dozen men, if you'd call paying 'em to quit beating 'em. He won two fights lately on a foul each time; and—what's tickling your memory, my son? —he's the guy who put Tony Onions out in the fifth round of a no-decision fight five weeks ago."

"Tony Onions can use 'em," remembered Billy. "Tony Onions was logical challenger, until that happened."

"I know he was. That's all Young Jim Mace's claim to notice. I know the inside dope on that—know it for a fact. Onions has a sick wife, and he was mighty close to being sick himself, from nursing her. Money'd pretty near run dry—doctors, nurses, dope, so on.

"Tony took a notion to freshen up the cash reserves, and signed to wallop thunder out of Young Jim Mace. Bought a pup, and a big one! Jim was trained up to the second and Tony wasn't. Jim Mace fouled him badly, six inches below the belt—referee didn't see it — Jim landed with a sleep punch, and Tony Onions took the count.

"Tony can't get a fight, now, for love or money; being licked now by a four-flush piece of Guinea cheese like Jim would put the absolute ki-bosh on any man. Jim Mace—nobody believes in him, mind, but on account of his having beaten Onions—has a right, more or less, to send his challenges out broadcast. He doesn't expect you to sign up with him; he'll be scared stiff, if you accept.

"But if my advice goes for anything, my son, you'll find no easier mark in all New York than Young Jim Mace, and if I were you I'd take him up quick, before his feet get too cold to let him sign his name."

"That's news to me about Onions," said Billy. "Is he very broke?"

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"Quite utterly stone broke," admitted Terence. "He bet every cent he had—gave odds—on himself to lick Jim Mace. Borrowed twenty-five from me the other day. Sure, he's broke as a bottle underneath a cartwheel — finished — dead beat — done. Lost his nerve, too, poor devil."

"Slip him fifty from me, next time you see him, Terence," ordered Billy; "and tell him to keep on grinning. Sign me up to wallop this man, Mace. Have Onions there to see Mace licked, for that'll do Onions good, anyhow; and fix the date for as early as possible. Tell Onions I'll see what I can do for him when this fight's over."

"Then Jim Mace gets the fight?"

"Yes," said Billy. "He's stolen a good old fighting name, and he may as well be punched into the discard as not. I rather like the job of thrashing these pretenders. You won't be able to get a bet down, I'm afraid, for they'll all want to bet one way; but stick out for all you think you can get of the gate receipts, Terence, and keep your eyes lifting. Make sure he posts a decent forfeit, too, and have the articles drawn good and tight."

So Terence went off to Fourteenth Street, to see, to haggle with cleverer and far less honest men than he was, over details of a fight that every prospective party to it knew well would not bring out one grain of sportsmanship. He expected to feel ashamed while negotiations dragged their course; but, as a matter of fact, he discovered that the men who had always mocked him and considered him an easy mark had unaccountably begun to treat him with respect, as a man of judgment.

"There's more to this easy fighting than I thought," he wondered. "I'm thinking we've let an awful lot of money slip out of reach, time and time again. And I'm thinking they're wise to it. That's why they used to laugh and don't now! Now I'm a wise guy, am I? Well—then I'll be a wise guy! Here goes!"

He haggled, argued, bargained, and drew up in the end an ironclad agreement by whose terms Billy Blain and Young Jim Mace were mutually bound to fight ten rounds at Sweeney's Clubhouse six weeks from that date. He stuck out for sixty per cent. of the gate receipts for Billy, win or lose, and he won his point.

"But we've got to have something for the other man," complained Sweeney. "By the time I've got mine out of it, what'll we give him?"

"He'll be lucky if he gets his forfeit money back, for fighting!" laughed O'Hanlon. "But that's your business. I've signed Billy Blain—you rope in Young Jim Mace, and pay him what you like. We'll post a forfeit the minute he posts his."

So the meeting adjourned, while Sweeney and some half a dozen of his friends went 'round to interview Young Jim Mace. They found that gentleman entirely off his guard; neither he nor his manager had hoped for better than a negative answer to their challenge. That would have given them excuse to advertise themselves by accusing Billy Blain of welshing, and would have suited them entirely. They could not, either of them, collect wit enough to back out of the challenge; they were signed up within ten minutes, told they were lucky, and left wondering whether it was worth five hundred dollars to be thrashed by Billy Blain.

Like horse-racing, prize-fighting is a perfectly clean sport in itself; the basic principle, of two men striving in a padded ring with protected fists for the verdict, under rules drawn carefully with a view to prevent brutality, is as sound as that of racing well-bred horses with a view to finding out which is speediest and therefore worthiest to breed from.

But there is something about both sports that seeps into the pores of a man and undermines his sense of decency and sportsmanship, oftener than not. The number of jockeys who have been "warned off" is almost countless; but the number of champions in the fight game who have never won a fight by shabby means, or soiled their reputations by questionable practise, is so small as to be nearly negligible.

Billy Blain had kept himself above the slightest hint of taint so far; but even he, now, was signing up for fights whose only aim was money. What wonder, then, that Onions, down and out, with a sick wife on his hands—with the sting of defeat still prodding him, and borrowed money keeping the landlord's man outside his door—should listen to temptation? Or that Young Jim Mace—quite utterly unworthy of a fight with the champion, but signed none the less to meet him; with the championship in reach, but no honest means of winning it—should tempt?

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TEMPTER and tempted got together twenty minutes after Terence O'Hanlon had left the purlieus of Fourteenth Street; he had attended to some other matters after signing the fight articles, and he was scarcely more than in the subway on his way home, when Young Jim Mace met Onions, drifting disconsolately 'round a corner, stooped, shabby, and ashamed-looking.

"Fancy meeting you!" grinned Jim. Certainly no one would have taken him for an Italian from his accent; he spoke like a born New Yorker, and, but for a shade of olive on his neck and face, he looked the part.

"To —— with you!" snarled Onions, not at all inclined to courtesy.

"Still feelin' sore? Well, that'll wear away. Say—listen! I got a notion—say, now! Fancy meetin' you!"

Onions held his fist clenched above his hip, and worked his right heel forward. In another second he would have punched and tripped his recent conqueror, and no doubt would have trodden on him afterward with gluttonous completeness; but Young Jim Mace forestalled him, and seized his forearm.

"Say," he almost whispered, hissing between his teeth, and using all the dramatic force his Italian ancestry had made him heir to, "me an' you ain't got to bear no grudges. Leastwise—listen 'ere. You think you got it in for me—what? Well, suppose I slips a little something your way, until you calls it even—what d'yer say to that?"

"Let go o' me!" growled Onions, wrenching his arm loose, and maneuvering once more for the advantage of position.

"There's money in what I'm offerin'—and more!" said Jim, taking a cautious step rearward. "There's the chance of lookin' up again. Say—what d'yer think o' Billy Blain, anyhow?"

Onions fingered a five-dollar bill—one he had just had from O'Hanlon, on account of fifty of Billy's money.

"I like him! Why?"

"Oh, just because." He walked away a pace or two, and then returned, pushing his face up close to Tony's and speaking in deadly earnest. "You like him, eh? You like him well enough to shed your chances for him? You like him well enough to let him crowd you out o' your room in the sun?"

"I haven't seen him want to."

Onions fingered the five-dollar bill again, and thought of O'Hanlon's promise of another forty-five. He could sense an offer coming; he had wit enough left to know that Young Jim Mace was not approaching him from either sympathy, or liking; there was something in the wind that smacked of underhanded action, and the hint of payment for the doing of it—indefinite and unexpressed, but there for any man in Onion's place to recognize.

Young Jim Mace had a sudden inspiration. He, too, was in a corner, more or less, and his wits were sharpened.

"He's been slipping you some coin?" he hazarded, but with an air of almost certainty. "He's been feedin' yer the bread o' charity! Admit it, now! Now, hasn't he? Gawd love a fly cop——you! An' you can't see through that game! Here—good-by! You're too innercent to mix with!"

He reached out a derisive hand, and Onions spat in it with much more than derision.

They were fighting, hammer and tongs, in less than half a second, and it took the united efforts of two policemen to separate them. Twenty minutes later they were under lock and key, and the telephone was working overtime to find them friends and bail. Some two hours later, Young Jim Mace's manager came in hot quest of him; he bailed his own man out with many grumblings and much abuse; but he left Onions behind the bars, in spite of piteous appeals from Onions and the darkly worded advice of Jim Mace.

"We can use him," whispered Mace, "and he'll never forget. He's one o' those grateful guys."

"He won't owe me nothin'," sneered the manager. "Come on! I've got my hands full dry-nursin' one bum fighter—I don't need another one."

It was Billy Blain who came to Onions's assistance in the end. Over the telephone Onions begged him to come down and bail him out—also to let him have the balance of the promised forty-five dollars, or some of it on account at least, so that he might pay the inevitable fine. Billy came down in a taxicab, arrayed in evening dress (for Mrs. Billy's social campaign was at its height of brilliance, and she would have made her husband wear a dress suit in the morning had she dared); his manner and self-evident prosperity annoyed Onions be-

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fore Billy had said a word, but the lecture he saw fit to give, when he had bailed Tony out and had him there, pilloried as it were before the cynical police, did more damage than the jealousy.

"I suppose," he growled, "that you're making the usual mistake. 'Cause my name's Tony, you take me for a Wop, and kid yourself I'll take anything at all from you? That it? Eh?"

"I know you're not a Wop!" Billy was quite calm, and inexpressibly mortifying. "I mistook you for a decent citizen, that's all. I don't call it decent to get fighting in the street with a hog like Young Jim Mace. What were you fighting about?"

"A question o' money," answered Onions; and the balance of the lecture, that was trembling on Billy's lips, dried up and was still. It occurred to Billy that he, too, was ready to fight Young Jim Mace, for a matter of some money.

Onions saw that he had made a hit, and with the ring fighter's instinct he followed his advantage.

"You mustn't think, Mr. Billy Bally Blain, Esquire, etcetery, that just because you're a —— Cockney Englishman with lots o' luck, an' a business in the Bronx, an' a flat in Harlem, an' a dress suit to your name—that just because you're champion, an' not a bad chap, an' lent me money, an' I took you for a friend in need and 'phoned to you—that therefore you're qualified to call me down without knowing anything about the facts. Here—you call that bail off, and I'll go back behind the bars!"

"Rats!" said Billy.

"I mean it!"

Billy laughed, and counted out nine five-dollar bills.

"Here's the balance of what I owe you," he smiled, holding out the money. "You'll likely need it in the morning."

Three policemen laughed. Billy kept on smiling, and the lieutenant at the desk saw fit to sneer. Onions was plainly hesitating between indignation and cupidity.

Billy remembered his own pride in the old days, when forty-five dollars would have seemed a fortune; but he remembered, too, that there had been no Mrs. Billy then —whereas there was a Mrs. Onions on a sick bed. There was a chair, close to the rail against which prisoners had leaned until bare wood shone shiny through the varnish; Billy laid the bills on the wooden seat, and turned and went without another word. Onions sneered after him, waited a full minute, and then started for the door as well. But a man in blue intercepted him.

"TAKE 'em!" ordered the officer, pointing.

"They're his—not mine!"

"You married?"

Onions had forgotten by this time the piteous appeal he had made anent his sick wife when he was first lined up before the desk. He remembered now, though.

"That anything to do with you?"

"Wife's ill, isn't she?"

"You're taking an awful lot of interest all at once, ain't you?" sneered Onions.

"Take that money!" ordered the officer again. He had an iron grip on Onions' arm, and one end of his club was quite uncomfortably intimate with Onions's ribs.

"Did you hear?"

Another policeman took the bills and shoved them into Onions's pocket; the first man took him by the neck, and thrust him through the door, and Onions found himself on the sidewalk, facing homeward, with forty-five dollars in his clothes.

There was no Billy Blain there to feel the snub of charity refused. If he went back to the police-station he would be clubbed; if he threw the bills away there would be a dozen prowlers of the streets ready to pounce on them, but none to applaud his pride; there was nothing but the feel of forty-five good dollars to influence him, and the growing recollection of his wife at home. He had reached the corner of the street before he quite made up his mind what he would probably do about it; but by the time he had walked another block the bills were so far his that he had almost forgotten who gave them to him. He only remembered that he had an awful, red-hot, smoldering grudge against Billy Blain—one to keep quiet about, but not to forget.

By the time that he had boarded a cross-town trolley-car, he could not have told himself exactly why he hated Billy Blain; he knew only that he did hate him, and that there was no other enmity in all the world so grim and hungry to be loosed. Five blocks before he reached the shabby-looking home that Billy Blain had helped preserve for him, he had begun to formulate a plan for "getting even." He must humble Billy's pride, as his own had been humbled;

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his head was awhirl with cutting repartee that he might have used in the police-station, and by this time he more than half believed he had used it. He assured his sick wife that he actually had used it.

"The son of a gun came down and jeered at me!" he explained. "But don't you fear —I'll get even with him. I'll get even."

"Where are you going, Tony?" she asked him.

"Going to see Young Jim Mace!"

"But, Tony! Come back! Won't you stay and talk with me a little while? You've been gone so long—you're always gone so long. Come back and talk to me!"

He walked back to the bedside, and laid ten dollars on the pillow.

"I'll be back by and by," he answered. "This is a case o' personal honor, and that comes first. I'll call in one o' the neighbors to you, an' you ask her to go out an' get you what you want. I'll be back when I've worked out a plan for getting even."

"Where did you get the money?" she asked him wonderingly. But he was gone, and had slammed the door behind him. He did not hear the question.

II

OF COURSE, under normal circumstances Onions would have quickly gotten over his obsession. But under the smart of unmerited defeat coupled with financial stress and trouble in his home, a man is apt to lose all sense of proportion, and to magnify the slightest triviality into serious ground for feud. On such occasions such a man as Tony Onions will act like a good dog taken with rabies, and bite the hand that reaches out to feed him.

The first road to revenge that Tony Onions considered was to go to Billy Blain and ask him for employment. He had little doubt but that Billy would engage him in some capacity or other round the garage; and, had he done that, Tony would have thawed out presently, and that would have been the end of things. For Billy Blain's was a sunny disposition, and the grouchiest men grew friendly when associated with him for any length of time.

But Tony thought again. He considered that his dignity had been too badly outraged, and his lust for vengeance was too great, to let him wait long weeks for an opportunity. True, it would be fine to throw Blain out of a car some day, traveling at full speed; that was a gorgeous dream—but something over-dreamy. There were surely better ways than that.

He began to imagine Billy in a ring with him, and to think of just exactly how he would have knocked him out—in the tenth round, for choice, of a ten-round no-decision bout. It was that notion that decided him to call on Young Jim Mace, the Italian whom at any other time he would have rather kicked than spoken to. A sense of outraged pride will make a man forget his pride sooner than any other thing.

He found Mace and his angry manager seated at opposite sides of a table in a dim, low-ceilinged room, engaged in acrimonious discussion.

"How did you get out?" demanded Cogan, the manager, without a hint of proffered hospitality.

"That's my affair. I came on business. If you haven't time to listen, say so!"

"Help yourself to a pew," said Cogan, kicking a wooden chair toward him; and Tony Onions took a seat, eyeing each of them in turn as if he were endeavoring to read their inner minds.

"You think you could lick me again, if the referee weren't paid to keep his eyes shut?" he demanded, looking straight at Young Jim Mace and then switching his eyes keenly on the manager. Neither of them answered, and he asked again.

"Answer me! This is business. I want to know. Do you think you could?"

"That all depends." It was the manager who found his tongue, and he elected for the present to be non-committal.

"Bah!" Tony Onions evidently had no doubt at all. "You wouldn't either of you dare sign up with me without the fight was fixed in some way! Now see here! If Jim Mace can't lick *me*—and you both know he can't—without fouling, what chance has he got to beat Blain? Blain's champion, and he'll see to it that the referee's all right. If there's any blind-eye business it'll be on Blain's side this time. Tell me, foulin' apart—which of us two stands the better chance o' beatin' Blain—me or him?"

"Suppose you cut out all that gas about foulin'," suggested Cogan angrily. "We don't admit to nothin' of the kind."

"I asked you which," repeated Tony.

"I was going to suggest something about

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Blain to you this morning," grumbled Young Jim Mace. "If you hadn't been so all-fired ready to show your contempt for me we'd have been fighting something or other long before this. Cough it up, now! What have you got under your shirt, that you're asking so many questions?"

"Do you want to fight Blain?" asked Tony.

"I'm signed to fight him."

"Do you like it?"

Jim Mace did not answer.

"How much do you stand to get out of it?"

"What's that got to do with you?"

"I asked how much. I'm here on business, and I'll talk when you tell me—no sooner."

"Five hundred."

"I thought as much. Got a forfeit up?"

"Sure," said Cogan. "We lose two thousand if he doesn't fight, and two thousand's all we've got."

"Are the articles drawn tight?"

"If you drew 'em tighter they'd bust."

"Well—if I suggest a plan, and it's a good plan; and if I fight Blain for you, he agreeing or not as the case may be, but you getting your forfeit back—will you be satisfied with two-fifty out o' that five hundred?"

"No!" swore Cogan and Jim Mace in unison.

"What kind o' pikers do you kid yourselves you are?" asked Tony Onions in disgust.

"What kind o' proposition do you call yours?" asked Cogan.

Tony Onions turned his chair about, and sat cross-legged on it, leaning over its back toward Cogan.

"I'll tell you," he said, tapping with his finger on the chair-back. "This is sweet revenge stuff. I want Blain in a ring with me—just once. I want him in the ring with me so bad that I'm game to quit the ring forever afterward, if I can have my way. I want enough money afterward to quit New York with, and that's why I stick out for two-fifty of the purse. I'm game to take my chance of jail or anything, but I want him—bad!"

"Speak on, Macduff!" said Cogan, plainly disposed to listen at least to the rest of the argument.

"What does Jim Mace stand to get out o' fighting Blain? Eh? I'll tell you. What them sportin' writers call oblivion. He gets five hundred, and his block knocked off. If he fouls, it's worse than ever; the papers made a kick about his decision over me—they'll kick harder yet if he fouls the champion, and they'll take good care he never gets another fight.

"But supposin' I fight Blain instead—what then? Why, who cares what then? Young Jim Mace was to have fought him, and he got the advertisin'; me—I get the ki-bosh. Blain gets the money either way, unless I chance to win. If I win, I'm champion; and see here! I'll sign a paper promising if I get champion to pay you guys five thousand within six months; I'll give a promissory note for it, and waive protest, same as the money-lenders make you do. Now—call that a deal?"

"But who—but how in thunder are you going to ring the changes on Blain?"

"THAT'S my affair. Will you two guys agree? I get two-fifty of the purse in any case; but I give a promissory note for five thousand. If I'm licked the note's no good, of course—you can keep it and be —— to you; if I win, I'm champion, and you'd be able to sell that piece o' paper on the market. Yes, or no?"

"Let's talk some more," suggested Cogan.

"I'm game," urged Young Jim Mace, whose respect for Billy's punching power increased with every moment that brought the fight nearer.

"I'll talk all you want when you're once agreed," said Tony Onions, "but I want my answer first. Now then—is it yes, or no?"

"But——"

"But nothin'! Yes or no?"

"If you can work it—yes!"

"You've got to give security you don't back out."

"Bah! The whole thing's a try-on! Who'd give *you* security?" asked Cogan scornfully.

They argued for an hour; and in the end they gave Tony Onions a half interest, in writing, in Young Jim Mace's "end" of the Blain-Mace purse in return for his promissory note at twelve months for five thousand dollars.

"And it's my belief we've thrown away two-fifty," grumbled Cogan, settling in his chair to hear the rest of Tony's plan. He changed his tone, though, in a moment.

"Have you ever noticed," demanded

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Onions, "how much alike Young Mace and I are? My right name isn't Tony; they called me that 'cause o' my dark skin; darken it some more, and you'd take me for a Wop an' no mistake. If I wore my hair different, an' had a scar on the right temple, an' a mole on my chin—if I walked wi' more spring, an' showed my teeth more, and twitched my nose every time I spoke—even you'd take me for Young Jim Mace, wouldn't you? If you weren't expecting anything."

"So help me! Who'd ha' thought of it?"

Cogan and Young Jim Mace sat back, staring first at Onions, then at each other. The resemblance was obvious now that their attention had been called to it, though a minute before either of them would have laughed at the idea. The features, shape, weight, height were all identical; it was only the mannerism and coloring that differed. A little acting—a little grease paint—and a scar—and the two men might be twins.

"Now do you see my game?" asked Onions.

"Let's hear some more."

"Why, any fool can see it. This here 'Young Jim Mace' o' yours could no more lick me than he could lick Blain, unless he fouled. I *might* lick Blain without even fouling, but if I can learn that trick that beat me, I'm sure to lick Blain. And I don't care what my name is, so be that I lick him. I go into training now—Young Jim Mace is my sparring partner. On the night, I take Mace's corner in the ring, and do my best. If I win I'm champion, but my name's Mace and I owe you two five thousand!"

"Sounds good to me," said Young Jim Mace, still dreading the prospect of a hammering at Billy's hands.

"Of course it does, you Wop!" sneered Tony Onions. "You wouldn't get the chance, if your fouling me hadn't robbed me of the chance of getting a fight with Blain on my own account. Now—are we all agreed?"

"All agreed!"

"Then let's start in training now—tonight! There's five or six days left for me to learn that trick in. Come on; give me a lesson now!"

III

BILLY BLAIN took little trouble with his training this time until a week before the fight. In the first place, he was always fit; in the second, Mrs. Billy and O'Hanlon and the hands about the shop were all so confident of his success that it would have been scarcely possible for any one connected with them to harbor a belief in the necessity for serious training.

But the Saturday before the date, O'Hanlon came to him and looked him over carefully—as he had a right to; he was "trainer." He pulled a lower eyelid down with dubious forefinger, punched Billy in the wind, all but taking him unawares, and getting a resounding rib punch in return, made the champion put his tongue out, and then tested his reflex action.

"What's the matter?" wondered Billy.

"That's what I'm wondering, my son!"

"Are you plumb, all-in crazy, Terence?"

"Not so crazy as the guys who're offering to bet against you, sonny—or so it seems to me. I've had a thousand dollars offered me this morning, at even money, that you don't beat Young Jim Mace next Saturday night."

"Was it worded that way?"

"Just like that."

"Don't bet, then."

"When you've finished teaching your grandmother how to suck eggs, suppose you tell me what you had for breakfast, sonny. Did it all taste good?"

"How d'ye mean?"

"I mean that as a pretty general rule the crowd in Murphy's bar don't undertake to bet unless they're more than averagely certain what they're betting on. If you were doped, they'd bet. If you'd broke your leg, they'd bet. They *know* something, or they wouldn't bet. What d'ye suppose they know?"

"Search me!" said Billy. "I'm feeling fine!"

"Well, then, ye're not doped yet. Not feeling sleepy, eh? Well—all the same we'll take a few precautions from now on. Ye'll eat nothin' that Mrs. Billy or myself haven't tasted for ye first—d'ye get that? And ye'll train as though ye had the championship to win—not hold against a mutt who couldn't punch holes in a piece of paper. Train! D'ye get me?"

So Billy went in training for a week before the fight, and when O'Hanlon wasn't helping Mrs. Billy take precautions of a dozen different kinds he was down-town, trying to find out whose cash it might be that was being offered against the champion at even money. To make sure that the

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offers were genuine, he accepted two small bets of fifty dollars each; and he was instantly pressed hard to bet in greater sums.

Terence O'Hanlon got scared and worried, and that made Mrs. Billy nervous. Both of them tried hard to hide their anxiety, but Billy could not fail to notice it—particularly since he usually called a doctor when Mrs. Billy had as much as a little-finger ache. He laughed at their suspicions, and pretended to be not in the least affected by them; but no man could have helped being affected to some extent, and when the day came for the fight he was very nearly as nervous as the other two.

They made all the show they could, for that was due the public; in spite of the feeble claims of the champion's opponent, advance sales had been good and a crowd was waiting outside to see Billy Blain go in. He treated them to a sight of him in his sixty-horse-power yellow Blennerhasset, that was getting famous by this time, and there was certainly no voice among the crowd to hint at waning popularity or faith.

But inside there was something different in the atmosphere—a quiet underhum that means nothing to the casual attendant, but to a man who listens carefully—as newspaper men for instance, are taught to do—conveys a world of meaning. Expectation was rife, and in this instance expectation almost surely meant disagreeable prospects for the champion; there was a strain of restless delight that could be traced, by any one who watched closely, to a little group of men who in between their whisperings to one another were offering to bet. They found few takers, but their offerings had one result; nobody, at all events, seemed anxious to bet the other way. Instead of offering ten to one on Blain, the fans were silent.

There was a roar of genuine applause, however, when Billy made his appearance in the ring, crawling through the ropes as his custom was and not troubling to give himself airs. He threw his arms up, and let the muscles ripple up and down his satin skin, then took his corner with arms folded, and waited to get the beastly business over.

In the ring—in his element, that was—he felt ashamed; this was the first fight of all his fights in which he had knowingly engaged a man who was not worthy of him. He made up his mind to waste no time on sparring or exhibition tricks; if the fans were to get their money's worth it should be in the form of a prompt knockout, whether that suited them or not.

"Be careful with him, sonny," counseled O'Hanlon, arranging the sponge and bucket in Billy's corner, and stationing one of the garage men to watch them carefully. "Feel your way with him; he'll maybe have a trick or two in pickle—else why do they bet? Take your time, and feel him out!"

"Rats!" said Billy, impatient as usual of advice from the ringside. He would listen to it while in training, but the ring found him ready, mind made up. And he was more determined on his course than ever on this occasion.

Young Jim Mace vaulted over the ropes and took his corner amid a babel of applause that was more than he either expected or deserved. The men who had been offering to bet started it, and kept it up; just as a theater audience will do, the fans applauded with the claque, and—as had been intended—Billy and O'Hanlon wondered why exactly an unknown, like Young Jim Mace, should rouse such enthusiasm. The speculation had a dampening effect.

"I don't see Tony Onions anywhere," said Billy looking 'round, and scarcely deigning a return stare at his opponent's corner. "Didn't you send him a free pass?"

"Haven't seen him these six weeks past," said O'Hanlon. "See—the referee's beckoning. Go and get instructions."

There was little for the referee to say, and Billy had no arguments to make of any kind. He seemed a little taken back by Young Jim Mace's form, and looked him over more than a little carefully; there seemed more firmness to his muscles and more poise and confidence about him than Billy had expected, although he somehow seemed indisposed to staring back. In fact, he avoided Billy's eyes rather obviously.

"That fellow's not the mutt you made him out to be," said Billy returning to his corner. "I thought you said he was a sucker."

"Look out for him, I warned ye!" hissed O'Hanlon.

"Time!" said the referee.

IF BILLY had determined to have this fight over quickly, his was nothing to the other man's intentions. "Young Jim Mace" rushed in and clinched, almost before the gong had sounded, and instead of punching wrestled Billy backward

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toward the referee. Of all times when the third man is least able to see what is transpiring, that that comes oftenest in a fight and that is chosen oftenest for fouling is when the men are clinched and close to the referee. They were up against the referee, and struggling too hard for him to "break" them, before twenty seconds of Round One had elapsed. And twice—in quick succession—Young Jim Mace fouled Billy Blain, six inches at the very least below the belt.

"Foul!" thundered Terence O'Hanlon, his eyes skinned for anything of that kind, and double-skinned by his anxiety. "I claim a foul!"

But the third man had not seen it. He broke them, and pushed them apart, and Billy was seen to be bending low, in evident pain, gasping and struggling to keep his feet. Young Jim Mace rushed in, and tried to land a right-hand upper-cut that, had it landed, would have ended the fight and changed the championship. But Billy's jaw was not there to meet it. He slipped back in time, and sat—sat slowly down, and took the count of nine.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Terence from his corner. "Are ye done, sonny? Are ye done this soon?"

But at the stroke of nine Billy Blain was on his feet again, retreating slowly, backward, 'round and 'round the ring—still bent more than a little forward, still in pain, and satisfied with guarding. Not once did he even pretend to counter hard, or to lead, or even try to land his opponent. There was one thing that O'Hanlon noticed, though no one else did; as he fell away and guarded he maneuvered all the while in such a way that Young Jim Mace's right was always next the referee and in full view, and he seemed to watch that right—to study it—to measure it, almost, and its movement.

"If he can hang on for a round or two," decided Terence, "he'll get even for that foul! So that's why they were betting, eh? 'Tis a wonder of a sportsmanlike pursuit, is boxing when the 'boys' get busy!"

At the end of the round Billy could not even straighten himself to walk to his corner; instead, he all but doubled up, and sat down on the floor instead of on his stool. He was badly hurt; and Terence wasted neither time nor temper on acrimonious discussion with the referee and Young Jim Mace's seconds, but laid his charge down full length on the floor, and worked hard over him—massaging him with great strong hands that drew the pain out and made Billy wince and groan, but left him feeling better.

"Time!"

"Has your man had enough?"

But Young Jim Mace's seconds were beginning to exult too soon. Billy was on his feet almost as soon as the jeer was loosed, and to every one's amazement he began the round by taking the fight straight to the other man. It seemed he had stored up a little steam while Terence handled him, and he loosed it all in three swift punches that landed, each of them, where they were least expected. Three grunts told what had happened to Jim Mace's fighting mechanism; he covered, and began to crouch.

But Billy's stored-up strength was all expended for the time, and he crouched too; and for a moment each stared in the other's eyes. Then Billy laughed.

It was strange, but the other did not laugh. He suddenly grew savage. He seemed ashamed, and then from shame he flared to the most amazing rage and waded in as if this were the tenth round and he must either win or leave the ring forever. He slogged and lunged and cut and chopped, and then clinched again. But his right was toward the referee this time, where it could be plainly seen, and Terence's bellowed advice to Billy to "Look out for his fouling-piece!" was wasted—except on the audience.

When Billy walked back to his corner at the call of time he was stronger than he had been at the commencement of the round, and the other man was puffed and blowing from his own exertions.

"Did I say," asked Billy, "that I hadn't seen Onions anywhere?"

"Ye did. Why? What d'ye mean?"

"Why, I take it back," said Billy. And though he questioned him a dozen times in the minute while he massaged Billy's groin, not one more word could O'Hanlon get out of him.

O'Hanlon knew, though, in Round Three; for at the very start, as Jim Mace rushed, Billy caught him underneath the chin with a tremendous left-hand swing—and followed with a right-hand to the eye. Both punches landed home and rocked "Jim Mace" backward and forward on his heels, but they left Billy, too, with his punching-power expended. That groin injury had come close to putting him completely out of business.

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Billy crouched and took the defensive once more, and as Jim Mace advanced and tried to plant some overhand blows on Billy's head, O'Hanlon noticed that the scar under the Italian's eye had slipped an inch or so. Billy's glove had cut the skin; the blood had washed the patch downward, and stripped none other than Tony Onions of a part of his disguise.

O'Hanlon laughed aloud—looked over to the seconds opposite and saw that they, too, were aware of what had happened—then yelled at Billy to remember that "garlic and an onion were pretty much the same!" At the end of the round he swore at Billy for not having worked harder and landed oftener.

"Pull yourself together, or they'll think ye're no champion!" he advised.

"Will I rupture myself for a mess of onions?" demanded Billy. "The ungrateful swab all but killed me. Go 'round and see if you can find any of those enthusiasts to bet with you. Leave one of the men here to act second—I'm all right now."

O'Hanlon tried hard during the progress of the next few rounds to place a substantial bet or two; but it was all too obvious that even "Young Jim Mace's" seconds were losing hope. Billy kept well within himself, taking advantage of every act of carelessness on Onions's part and cutting his face to a pulp, but running no risks and keeping a singularly wary eye on that low left, that always seemed to hover somewhere near the belt line on the chance of slipping underneath unseen. Round after round saw Billy growing stronger and his opponent weaker—holding on and clinching, and—later—running backward.

The Eighth Round was half over when O'Hanlon came to the conclusion that his efforts were being wasted, and returned to his place in Billy's corner. Just as he reached it Billy straightened suddenly, and landed a parabolic swing on Onions's eye. Onions reeled backward, and Billy followed with a left again to the chest. That brought Onions' chin down, and a third—a terrific right on the angle of the jaw—sent Onions sprawling for the count.

There was almost no applause. It had been a tame, uninteresting fight, with the champion—as far as the fans could see—in nothing like his usual form.

"Will ye make a fuss about their ringing Onions in on ye?" asked Terence, working over the swollen groin in the small, hot dressing-room.

"No," said Billy. "Onions and garlic both stink; I'd as soon fight one man as the other, and we've stirred up stink enough. This exhibition will have done my reputation more damage than I care about. Listen, Terence: hear me swear it! From now on, I'll be champion in sober earnest; I'll show them how a champion behaves. And no champion, of the kind I mean, listens to his wife's advice about the challenges he accepts—nor gets into a scrape of this kind. Don't answer! We've soiled our hands this once; from now on we're going to give the public a square deal and keep clear of Onionses and Wops—d'ye hear me, Terence?"

"I hear ye, son—I hear ye. I'm thinking though, that there's a third one of us may prevent."

TERENCE was wrong, though, as it happened. Billy had hardly limped out to the auto when his wife rushed to his arms and greeted him with:

"Billy boy, I'm sorry you fought any one like Young Jim Mace. Keep clear of cheap skates from now on; won't you, Billy?"

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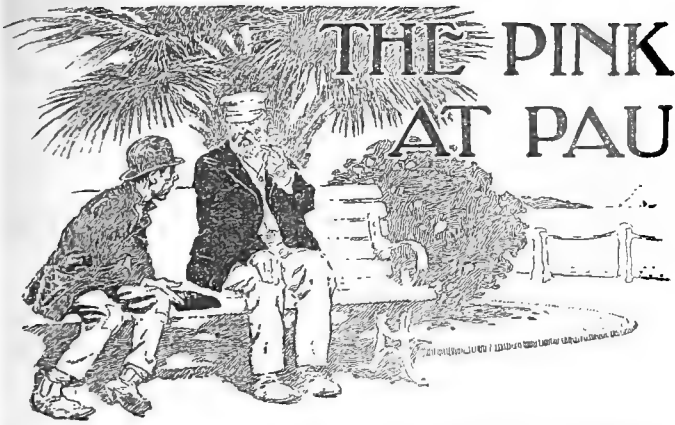

THE PINK PEARLS AT PAUATEA

By J. Allan Dunn

Author of "The Island of the Dead," "The Greenstone Mask," etc.

THE Domain, of Sydney, is by day a pleasant public park where the flotsam of the city sit i' the sun, walk and admire the flowers, play on the lawns or loaf on the benches, according to their ages and temperaments. By night the less fortunate jetsam slink to lairs amid the shrubbery, and try to forget in troubled sleep the trials of yesterday, the hazards of tomorrow.

Captain Shiels—Wilson Shiels of the South Sea trading-schooner *Lassie Mine*—was wont, on sunny shore-going afternoons, to smoke his pipe and gaze on the brilliant flower-beds with all the constant seafarer's passion for bloom. Shiels was rated as a canny Scot by his fellow skippers, close at a trade and stingy with the yardstick, while his "pieces" of stick tobacco were notoriously the shortest currency in the Marshall, Ellice, Gilbert, and Fiji groups, where he drove hard bargains in copra, turtle and shell with the ease-loving chiefs.

His face, as near repose in contemplation of the flowers and the passing idlers as it ever became, was not calculated to inspire even the casual request for a match. A cadaverous-looking individual, clad in a shabby coat slimy at the seams as if snails had tracked them, with shapeless, raveled trousers, who seemed cold even in the torrid sunshine and was palpably hungry, looked dubiously at the skipper several times before, with a brace born of desperation, he approached the bench where Shiels sat nursing his pipe in the hollow of his hand.

"Would yer care to——" He broke into a fit of coughing that shook his undersized, undernourished form till he clung to the back of the seat for support.

"Nothing for cadgers," said Shiels. "Ye're wasting the time, my lad."

"Hi'm no cadger," said the man, his speech betraying his cockney dialect. "Hi hain't haskin' you for nothink. Hi saw yer was a sea-goin' man, han' Hi wanted to show yer somefink."

"I'm buying no diamond rings," said the skipper firmly, "nor picked-up lockets."

"Giv a bloke a charnce, carn't yer?" replied the man, fumbling in an inside pocket. "Yer can look a minute; hit won't corst you a farving."

He spread a square of black velvet on the bench and spilled on it from a little bag some half a hundred pearls that shimmered in the sunshine with soft rainbow luster. They were of all colors, all sizes and shapes, blue-white, pink, gray, and black, oval, round, and pear-shaped.

"Hello," said Shiels, blinking. "What's this? Ye'll no' have been breaking into a jeweler's, have ye? There's a policeman across the lawn."

"Chuck it," replied the cockney indignantly. "Would Hi be showin' swag hin the hopen? Tyke a look hat that, will yer?"

He selected a pear-shaped pink gem and handed it to the skipper, who took it in the palm of his hand and viewed it appraisingly.

The owner of the pearls stood by, breathing with difficulty, chalky of skin, smudgy hollows under his eyes and in his cheeks. He put a grimy handkerchief to his lips as his hacking cough racked him, and glanced fearfully at the cloth as he removed it.

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"That's a bad hoast ye have, my lad," said Shiels. "Ye should be careful. Where did ye get these?"

"Fish-scale pearls," said the man. "They hain't many can myke 'em like that. Hi learned 'ow hof a Frenchy who was a lodger hin hour 'ouse at 'ome. Made from the scales hof a fish 'ardly bigger than a minner. Bleak, they calls 'em. Hi hused to fish for 'em in the Lea 'ome, near Tott'nham. 'Ard to catch—blarst this corf hof mine, hit'll get me yet. 'Ard to catch, the little blighters, 'cept wiv blood-worms. Scales rub hoff heasy, like greasy di'mond-dust. Tykes heighteen fousand fish to myke a pound hof pearl-hessence. Then you lines little glass balls wiv 'em. Hyn't they beauties?

"No one to buy 'em 'ere," he went on. "This is a —— of a plyce. Took me hall my savin's 'ome to get 'ere, hand now Hi carn't myke henough to get haway. Buy the lot, guv'nor. Ten-pound for the lot. Hi'm fair sick for 'ome. Hi'll get well there. That's hall Hi dream hof nights, hand fink, w'en Hi carn't sleep. Nelson's Monniment, hand the Socialists hand sufferagettes shootin' hoff their mouths. 'Yde Park hand the Marble Harch, the 'Ighw'y on Saturday night, wiv the lamps flarin' hover the costers' carts hand the donah's mooching hup hand down. ——! Hi want to get 'ome. Hi'm sleeping hout 'ere nights, hand starving days."

"I'll give you five pounds for them, my lad," said Shiels.

"Five quid!" snorted the man. "A fine pirote you har. Hi'm giving 'em to yer hat ten.

"You don't want me to work my passige 'ome," he whined. "Hi wouldn't larst a week hin a stoke-'ole. Hi won't tyke hit."

Captain Shiels laid out six golden sovereigns in a row on the bench, where the sun caught them, and straightened out the glittering coins craftily.

"Well, I'll make it six," he said, "and not a sixpence more or less. I'll not beat you down, seeing you need the money. I'm no Jew."

"Jew! Mebbe you hain't, but Hi've got my hideas hon where one of the lorst tribes settled, hand hit warn't a 'undred miles from Heddinburrow."

"There are no Jews in Scotland, my lad," replied Shiels, unmoved. "Better take your money. It'll see you home. I can speak a word for you with some of the stewards. There's my address."

The cockney took the card unseeingly, his eyes glued on the coins.

"There wos one Jew hin Scotland, once," he said. " 'E died hin Glasgow hof starvation. Hi'll tyke your blarsted money."

NOW CARRYING the mock pearls with him, Captain Shiels boarded a street car for uptown and, after dinner at his boarding-place and some figuring on the back of an envelope, set out again, arriving at his destination, a forlorn little moving-picture theater on a side street, just as the meager last audience was taking the places for the second show. A sour-faced woman, who looked as if she was suffering from a combination of dyspepsia and chilly feet, was taking in the scanty coppers with an air of bestowing a favor by accepting dubious currency.

"Captain Jarvis on duty?" asked Shiels.

The woman vouchsafed a backward jerk of the head.

"How's business the night, Captain?" asked the visitor of a stout man with an inflamed face, a beery breath and bleary eyes, who was taking up the tickets.

"Rotten," replied that individual morosely. "Want to see the show?"

"I'll take a look at it," conceded Shiels. "I want a bit of a talk with you afterward."

"Talk's cheap. Help yourself. There's lots of room."

The last jerky, spotty film run off, Shiels rejoined Jarvis, the gloomy proprietor of the misnamed Imperial Theater.

"Take quite a while, what I have to say," he said. "Is there somewhere we can go—and have a drop of something to help the talking?"

Jarvis looked at him as if any invitation from Shiels was something nearly miraculous.

"I'll let the missus and Bill close up," he said. "My dear," he informed the dour female, "I'm going out with Captain Shiels on business."

"Business, of course!" she sniffed. "And if it should happen to be pleasure you'd take good care I wouldn't share it."

Jarvis blighted her evident desire for further speech by retreating into the smelly interior, where he shouted up instructions to Bill, hidden in the operating-loft. Then

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he promptly joined Shiels, who had deemed it wisest to await him in the street.

"Is it going to be beer or whisky?" demanded Jarvis.

"Whisky, of course; the best ye can find."

Jarvis elevated his eyebrows, but led the way silently to the bar-parlor of a near-by public-house where they were waited upon by a buxom but businesslike barmaid, who appeared relieved when she saw that Shiels was the paymaster.

"So business is bad, Jarvis. I'm sorry to hear it," said Shiels, testing the temperature of his hot Scotch.

"You don't look it," rejoined Jarvis. "Yes, it is bad. What with the Jews and the trusts there's nothing in it. Why?"

"Ye could hardly expect trade when ye show a film of the Gordon Highlanders marching past and have that music-box of yours playing 'All Coons Look Alike to Me' at the same time. Ye have to be up to date to get the bawbees."

"Stow that," said Jarvis, gulping down his liquor. "You didn't ask me here to talk about my shop and my troubles. What's in the wind? Let's have another drink."

Shiels looked dubiously at the empty glass.

"Ye get no good of your liquor, bilging it that way," he said.

Jarvis grunted inarticulately and touched the bell.

"And cigars," he said to the barmaid, as she brought in the second supply.

Shiels shifted nervously, but paid and said nothing.

"Ye were a good judge of pearls once, Jarvis," he said, "before——"

"Before I went broke through a monsoon and a blackguard of a Fiji chief," broke in Jarvis hotly.

"Exactly. But what do you think of these?"

Shiels set out his pearls on a blue navy handkerchief which he spread on the little service-table.

"Whew!" ejaculated Jarvis, clapping his hands on his thighs and hitching up his chair. "Whew! Yours?"

Shiels nodded.

"I haven't seen a lot like that since Duclos made his clean-up of the Tuamotus," said Jarvis, his eyes glittering with cupidity. "Must be nigh on to ten thousand dollars there, trade prices. There ain't one under three grains—maybe a carat. It's a mixed-pickle lot, ain't it? What's the pinks? West Indian conch or fresh-water mussel? Or are they South Sea shell?"

"Neither," said Shiels. "You figure them at ten thousand, eh?"

"That's just a rough guess at what they'd fetch. Don't suppose they cost you that?"

"They didn't. They cost me a wee bit more than the price of a new overcoat. They're scale pearls, Jarvis, every one of them."

The avaricious glitter of Jarvis' eyes faded, and his face assumed a more contented expression.

"Oh!" he said. "Well, I never saw such good fakes. They took me in all right, and I didn't use to lose much money over pearls. They'd fool 'most any one without an acid test. Maybe it was because you showed 'em. What's the game? Want me to pass 'em off? Because if you're thinkin of that there's nothing doing."

"I'm wanting you," said Shiels, "to make a little trip for me down to the Fijis. As skipper."

"You mean you're goin' to give me a ship?" asked Jarvis, breathing hard and leaning across the table.

"How would it suit you to go to sea again?"

"Suit me? Man, d'ye think I like bein' a landlubber tied down to a movin'-picture show that don't pay?"

"To say nothing of your wife," suggested Shiels.

"We'll say nothing of her. But my lungs fair ache for a whiff of the Trades. What ship do I get? Hang it, Shiels, I'd turn buccaneer to get the slant of a deck under my feet once more, and know I was settin' the courses!"

"I'm giving ye the *Bonny Dundee*," said Shiels.

Jarvis' jaw dropped.

"I thought you said ship," he grumbled. "You sailed the *Bonny Dundee* till you couldn't get a crew to board her. They say you can look through her weather-seams and see all you want of the view without going on deck. She's a sieve, not a ship."

"There's a lot of work in the schooner yet," replied Shiels. "I've had her hooped and overhauled and she's fit. I had an offer for her last week."

"For firewood," muttered Jarvis.

"Anyhow, that's the ship ye'll get or none," said Shiels.

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"When do I start?"

"Three weeks or less, as soon as I can get her outfitted."

"Three weeks. Why, the rains ain't over yet! What kind of a fool proposition is this, taking a schooner to the Fijis in the wet season?"

"I was thinking ye'd not be unwilling to make a bit of money, and at the same time get a bit o' revenge," said Shiels. "As to where I come in, I'm figuring on a job that needs two to work it. That's where you come in, and you'll share in the profits."

"What d'ye mean by revenge?"

"Ye've no' a great respec' for Purikia of Tirau, have ye, Jarvis?"

"Purikia!" exploded Jarvis, his fiery countenance turning plum color. "He's a slimy skunk with no more heart than a beach-slug! Broke me, he did, and thought it a joke! You know the yarn. Monsoon drove me half a mile ashore on Tirau, and smashed down my schooner with a broken back in the middle of his taro-patch. It's there today. He's propped it up and uses it for a storehouse and council-place—'Jarvis' Luck' they call it. It's a standing joke all over the South Seas! Blast his eyes, I'd swim there to get even with him, if I could! All our boats was gone or smashed and he made me pay for a rotten canoe to make Levuka in. Grabbed all my stores and had the gall to talk damages, the leather-skinned swab!"

"Why didn't you complain to the Commissioners?"

Jarvis merely glared.

"Ah! There was some story once about blackbirding; I'd forgotten that. Well, I'm offering ye a chance to get even with Purikia and set you up again. You ought to make enough out of this trip to charter the *Bonny Dundee* from me permanent."

"What am I to trade for? Copra won't be started drying. And where do these come in?" He indicated the pearls.

"You're going after pearls."

"There ain't none in Purikia's lagoons. Cleaned out long ago."

"There will be when you take these down there."

A look of comprehension began to dawn in Jarvis' face.

"You mean——" he said tentatively.

"Ye have but small talent as a financier, Jarvis," said Shiels quietly, "but I see you begin to have a glimmerin' of my intention. I'll gi'e ye the details as far as I've worked them out."

"She put too much lemon in that last drink," hinted Jarvis, swallowing the sugary remnant of his toddy.

"I hadn't noticed it."

"Mebbe the next'll be better?"

Shiels sighed but took the hint, and the pair settled to a discussion of their plans that lasted until midnight, when the businesslike barmaid crisply informed them that it was closing-time.

"So I'll follow you in six weeks," said Shiels, as they walked homeward. "Keep a lookout for me. I'll make Pauatea at night and set Coston signals. Then you get busy."

"Suppose Purikia don't jump to your end of the proposition? If he's got one of them dyspeptic streaks of his working, he might pass it up."

"Ye've struck a weak point there, Jarvis. I've taken thought of it and I'll bolster it. Ye'll have noted, or ye should have, that there's but two matters of much importance to the Kanaka. One is sex and the other is stomach."

"Humph!" said Jarvis. "That goes general, outside of Kanakas."

"You're right. Now Purikia's stomach is nothing to be proud of, but he's crazy after women, which is unfortunate for him in a country where they esteem a man chiefly by his poundage. Now, if the Fijis was Turkey we might buy him a Circassian slave and make a hit. But the law and my conscience, which is no' that callous as you might think, Jarvis, are against the proceeding. We must think of something to tease him with, that he'd be willing to give an island for, as he will if he sets his fancy on a thing."

"I've got it," said Jarvis exultantly.

"What?"

"Lookee here. I'll have to close the shop anyway. I can't sell it for scrap, account of the Trust. What's the matter with taking down the machine and some films? I can get 'em cheap. There's one we run last week of a hoochy-koochy dancer that should fetch him out of a faint. We could take Bill down as operator. He could help out your supercargo. He's a pretty smart chap."

"Not smart enough for me to pay extra wages to."

"You won't have to. He's crazy about the South Seas anyway. He'll go for the

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trip. Besides, I owe him three week's screw, and it's the only chance he stands of getting it."

"By and full, that's no' a bad idea of yours, Jarvis. We could take that Gordon Highlanders film too. That should create quite an impression."

"The outfit'll make a fine present."

"Man, man, have ye no sense of business? I'll sell it to him, and at a fair price."

"I'll let you have it cheap," said Jarvis.

"I'm thinkin' ye will," said Shiels.

A MONTH later, the water-front gossips of Sydney Harbor, especially those versed in South Sea matters, were astonished by seeing the schooner *Bonny Dundee*, long considered as fit only for breaking up, brought up from the shipwright looking to the casual eye perfectly able, and proceeding to make ready for sea, with all the signs of a South Sea destination two months ahead of the usual season. Later they were dumbfounded at the arrival, arm in arm, of Captain Shiels, her owner, and Jarvis, "Busted Jarvis," who had quit the sea ten years ago, but who now, smart in blue serge, was evidently skipper of the restored vessel.

"Is that pore blighter goin' to sea in that water-strainer?" asked a dock-mariner, his face bitten harder by whisky than weather, of his grimy booze-mate. "Look at 'im, hooked on to Shiels! They're pals."

"I bet Shiels 'as insured the old ark an' Jarvis is goin' to wreck 'er."

"Not 'Slippery' Shiels. He's too foxy to take a chance with Lloyds."

"I'll bet yer."

"Bet what?"

There being but twopence between them, owned by the last speaker, the subject languished and idle speech was exchanged for idler looking on.

"Tide'll serve in half an hour," said the smartened and revivified Jarvis, looking very different from the surly proprietor of the Imperial Theater, now closed. "Schooner's in better shape than I thought."

"Ah, she's a fine craft!" said Shiels. "Where's Joey?"

"Forward. I'll pass the word for him."

Joey, a Tahitian native with a perpetual smile, long-service boatswain aboard the *Lassie Mine*, came aft.

"Joey," said Shiels, "you savvy this trip you go along Captain Jarvis. He speak what you do. Bimeby you come back to me down along Tirau way. You savvy?"

"Plenty I savvy, *Kapitani*."

"He's a smart laddie," said Shiels, as the Kanaka went forward. "You can use him fine on planting the pearls. Then, when I show up, he'll desert from you because ye've been unco' cruel wi' him, ye ken, and tell me of the pearls you're finding on Pauatea."

"I wish I had your head for details," commented Jarvis.

"I'll admit to ye, Jarvis, that there have been times when I would gladly have exchanged it for your heid for liquor. It's no that easy to be fit for trade after a hard night wi' some of these *kawa*-crazy chiefs. Now, ye must borrow some men from Purikia to help you as soon as you start rotting out. Try and get a chap named Kiro—he's married one of Purikia's sisters and he'd trot back with the news as fast as you make it. Don't spring the pearls till I'm sighted. Then arrange with Joey so that Purikia's Kanakas find the fakes and fix it so they get a chance to cut over to Tirau with the news."

"It's going to work like a charm," said Jarvis confidently. "Those pearls 'd fool anybody anywhere."

"If they fooled you in your hand what would you think if you picked them out of an oyster?"

"Your great-grandfather must have been a wizard, Shiels."

"I've been told that he was a cattle-stealer, and a good one," said the skipper.

"I can believe that too," said Jarvis, "meanin' no offense."

"No offense," returned Shiels, smiling. "I'll be saying good-by to ye. Ye'll no' want to lose the tide."

PURIKIA, chief, by descent and British favor, of a cluster of low-lying atolls on the westward fringe of the Fijis, was not a popular ruler, even with himself. He had many troubles, half of which were real ones. To begin with, his lagoons were practically stripped of pearl-shell and the accompanying pearls, once his chief source of income. Next, hard luck with monsoon-gales had lost to him many hundreds of coco-palms, representing each nearly a dollar—in trade—of annual revenue.

Then there was his one perpetual and particular grievance, the fact that, despite

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earnest endeavors to satisfy an enormous appetite, he could not achieve even a moderate girth. In a land where a man is gaged by his shadow, he was called derisively behind his back the "palm-tree" and, being a conceited person, it galled him. Also it made him unpopular with the ladies. His wives were mates of duress, of pride of place, of anything but affection, and he knew that too. Added to these was dyspepsia that all the vegetable pepsin of unlimited *papaias* could not assuage, dyspepsia fostered by indulgence in every patent medicine that he could beg, buy, borrow or steal, and you may glimpse some fleeting idea of Purikia's distress and disposition.

His action toward Jarvis was somewhat condoned by the fact that the Captain had once blackbirded some of the chief's best subjects to the Hawaiian sugar-plantations without consulting either them or their lord, or paying the latter a head-fee; and many of the traders had felt, as had Purikia, that the chief had merely evened up matters by confiscating Jarvis' schooner when luck delivered it into his power.

But Purikia was ever a person to be approached with a full measure of diplomacy. At the close of the rains, which invariably aggravated his stomachic disorders, he was never in the best of moods, and was left as severely alone by his followers as he would permit. He dwelt, solitary, like an ill-tempered ogre, in the cabin of the stranded schooner, the *Mary M.*—better known since its disaster as "Jarvis' Luck."

The arrival of the *Bonny Dundee* in the lagoon of Tirau so far ahead of the season astonished the chief, yet soothed his mood as he thought of the possibilities of some untried draft, bitters, powder or pill that might be in the skipper's medicine-chest. All nostrums were alike to Purikia, provided they professed to cure dyspepsia or add flesh.

Stalking down to the beach, his tall form so gaunt that one expected to hear the bones rattle, or at least grate, as he walked, Purikia was perturbed as he recognized in the inflamed though cheery countenance of the man in the stern of the incoming whaleboat the features of Captain Jarvis. The Fijian equivalent for "O come ye in peace or come ye in war?" flitted through his mind, but he stolidly awaited the beaching of the boat.

Jarvis sprang out and advanced blithely.

"Ah, Purikia!" he said. "I've been a long time getting back, but here I am. How's every little thing? I've got some of the grandest dope aboard for you you ever tasted. Make you fat in three months. Guaranteed! Pictures and testimonials to prove it."

The chief's eyes brightened, but he remained non-committal.

"You come along trade?" he asked.

"Sure! Don't you see my schooner? Goin' to keep this one in the water, too."

"Copra no dry longatime yet."

"No want um cargo yet. Bimeby, eight or ten weeks maybe, I catch cargo. Joey, where's that case? Oh, here it is. Look, Purikia! Six big bottle Kill-Pain, great *papalangi* (white man) medicine. Six big bottle Make-Weight. You take, plenty quick you weigh—oh, maybe two hundred pound!"

Purikia condescended to accept the drugs graciously, and motioned to a native to take them to the village.

"Here's a book goes with the Make-Weight, Purikia. See! Plenty picture along *papalangi* folk who get fat. Show them when thin, show them after they take medicine."

"What you want um, *Kapitani?*" said the mollified chieftain. "Suppose you no want um cargo?"

"I tell you, Purikia. Too much longatime I do nothing. Make no *tala* (money). When I get new ship I plenty hurry get *tala*. So I think I work along some pearl. Suppose I lucky, I make plenty *tala*. Suppose no luck, I catch shell anyway. Better than I do nothing."

"Humph. Where you find um pearl?"

"You remember one time, before I lose ship, I want water. Tirau water not very plenty and you speak me go along Pauatea. I find water there and in lagoon I see one patch shell you leave some time. Suppose he there still, I like try Pauatea shell."

"Ugh!" grunted the chief. He had left the patch because the Pauatea lagoon had persistently refused to yield anything but badly colored baroques and seed-pearls. If the fool *Kapitani* wanted to exploit the remnant of the non-productive colony, and would pay for it, that was his lookout. "He who buys the pig has to eat it."

"I like keep um all my pearl," he said aloud. "Suppose you work um Pauatea patch, how much you pay?"

"I give you twenty pound one month."

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"That damfool talk. One month you catch um shell he worth fifty pound. You give me one month one hundred pound, one-half all pearl you find, you keep um shell."

"I'm not rotting out shell for my health! The traders speak all your pearl he gone longawhile ago. But if that patch still there I'll take a chance for twenty-five pounds."

The bargain was closed finally for forty pounds a month, in advance, with twenty-five per cent. of all pearls to go to Purikia. Jarvis also agreed to pay a dollar a day for every man the chief should furnish him to help out his own crew.

"I'll send over Joey when I'm ready for the men," said Jarvis. "He can sail over in the whale-boat and bring back the men I want. Suppose no room, you send canoe."

"Joey!" exclaimed the chief. "Joey? He belong along *Kapitani* Sahili."

"Not now. Captain Shiels he get plenty mad along Joey. Joey he get mad too and come along me. Now he belong all same *Bonny Dundee*, my ship."

Purikia accepted the explanation and went off to the schooner to collect his first month's rent and partake of some bitters. Then he went promptly ashore and repaired to the cabin of the wrecked schooner, intent upon sampling the Kill-Pain and the Make-Weight. Whatever virtues they may have possessed were somewhat handicapped by Purikia's taking them in swift succession without regard to prescribed doses, a combination that produced a turmoil in his stomach which he set down to the power of the *papalangi* magic, and was accordingly content.

Jarvis lost no time in setting courses and taking advantage of the ebb for Pauatea, twenty miles south and west. He had no desire to linger near his late lamented schooner and as soon as the lagoon was cleared closeted himself with Joey to decide upon the best method of salting pearl-oysters with imitation gems so that the finders would be convinced of their luck.

"That easy," announced Joey. "Everybody work. I speak quick to Fiji Kanaka, 'Look!' He turn and say: 'What for you speak? I no see.' That time I slip um pearl. He pick up shell, find um pearl. That time I look away. Kanaka he think he plenty smart, he put um pearl in mouth. Bimeby he speak you he plenty sick. He take canoe, go along Tirau, show um Purikia."

"I hope they don't happen to bite down on one of 'em," said Jarvis. "They're filled with paraffin, I reckon, and a bite would snap the last string on the fiddle and spoil the jig. But it's a small chance."

FIVE weeks later, less two days, Captain Shiels sat in his cabin after supper writing up his log. He had come kiting all the way from Sydney; the *Lassie Mine* was at that moment sliding through a light sea at a nine-knot gait; and the skipper was happy.

"Pauatea off the port bow, sir," announced his second mate.

"How d'ye ken that, Mr. Johnson? If ye've held the course I gave ye we should be ten miles away, and ye can't pick up a squatty atoll at that distance on a dark night."

"Wind's shifted a bit, sir. We're well to wind'ard of Pauatea. I can't see it, but I can smell it."

"Ah, that's verra possible. Jarvis should be rotting out. I'll not come on deck. Keep as you are for a while, then make an inshore tack and, as you come about again, close in, set a couple of Costons, green on white, and send up a rocket. Signal till ye get an answer. Have the skylight closed. I can get the smell of it now. It sticks like paste. The ship'll smell like a glue-factory. And ask Mr. Langdon to step below."

Johnson, with fingers ostentatiously clipping his nose, and an expression of martyrdom on the visible remainder of his face, went on deck.

"Smell pretty bad, Langdon?" asked Shiels of his first officer.

"I don't mind it much. I was on sugar-ships for seven years. Any other stink is perfume to me, after that. But it does stick in the throat. Makes it kinder dry and choky."

"Well," conceded Shiels reluctantly, "the occasion is one that might be celebrated with a wee nippie. Here's to ye!"

"That's fine Scotch," said Langdon suggestively, setting down his glass.

"It is that! I've found it aye pays to buy the best. It's more economical. A little of it goes a long way. One drink of that, now, is worth three of the ordinar'. Ye can put the bottle away, Langdon.

"As soon as ye get an answer from Jarvis

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we'll put about. I don't want to make Tirau for a couple of days yet, so as to give Jarvis a chance to get his men over from Purikia and have things under way."

"All right, sir. The delay'll break that assistant super's heart, though. He's got a silk shirt and shoes and socks and new ducks, with a fifteen-buck panama, all laid out on his bunk ready to strike the *fahines* on Tirau blind and helpless. Not to mention the handkerchief an' tie."

"He appears to have gathered some verra peculiar ideas about the fascinations of the Fiji ladies, Langdon. You'll have been stringing him. I fear the rings in their noses will shock him. They're no incentive to love-making."

"They're a blame good excuse not to," said Langdon. "As to stringin' him, he was so determined to find 'em beautiful, Johnson and me hadn't the heart to disappoint him."

THE *Lassie Mine* entered the lagoon of Tirau at dawn, sky and sea resplendent with softly changing glows of green and gold and crimson. The schooner seemed to be afloat in the heart of an opal. The chain rattled out in twelve fathoms; the sailors slipped in gaskets and prepared to furl. Johnson loaded blanks into the little signal-gun under the orders of Shiels, who knew how dear was a salute to the ears of a chief.

Whang!

Protesting birds arose from the village tangle as the echo was tossed haphazard from palm to palm.

Whang!!

A sleepy native, too lazy or too drunk to turn in the night before, peered from under the drooping boughs of a *hala*-bush.

"Eyah!" he yelled, recognizing the *Lassie Mine*, and scuttered over the sand to the village. By the time the salute was finished, half of Tirau was congregated yawningly on the beach, discussing this second early arrival of the trading-vessels, and hoping that Purikia would hurry and lift the *tapu* so that old friends might eat and drink and do a little trading.

Bill Bronson, ex-operator of the Imperial Theater, came on deck, resplendent in spotless toggery and eager to go ashore and show himself. His mind was filled with visions of bronze beauties with black silken hair and midnight eyes, arrayed so as best to display their adequate charms, with a smile for the stranger and a fragrant wreath with which to enchain him in temporary and delightful bondage. These preconceived ideas, culled from the folders of steamship lines, had been fostered by Langdon and Johnson, who had not seen fit to apprize him of the vast difference between the handsome Polynesians of the eastward groups and the frizzly-haired, nose- and ear-ringed Papuans of the outlying Fijian atolls.

"Ain't we goin' ashore?" he demanded of Sanders, the regular supercargo, a dour, dried little haddock of a Scotchman, who despised his unnecessary and perfectly useless assistant. "They're all waiting for us."

"The chief sets the time o' day hereabouts," said Sanders. "When he's through sleeping the day starts, and not before."

It was noon before Purikia roused himself in the cabin of "Jarvis' Luck" and was informed by his waiting brother-in-law of the arrival of the *Lassie Mine*.

The chief took an eye-opening swig of the last bottle of Kill-Pain and ordered his *poi* and dried squid for breakfast.

"You forget all about that pearl you brought from Pauatea yesterday," he commanded Kiro. "You tell Kauila, my sister; you tell every one. If any one speaks, they get hung up by their heels."

Kiro shuddered and promised. Purikia was perfectly capable of carrying out such a threat and baking a chosen victim from the suspended larder afterward. Even Kauila would keep quiet under such expressed intention.

Breakfast over, Purikia assumed his state turban of gauzy bark-cloth that protected his frizzly red-dyed hair, and ordered his whale-boat. Arrived on board the schooner and propitiated with a stinging mixture of peppermint, ginger and squareface, he proceeded promptly to business.

"What for you come early, *Kapitani* Sahili? Copra no dry yet."

"Well, Purikia, I'll tell you. Pearls are going up in price. 'Way up! I hear Duclos on Tahiti speak along a friend they go plenty high. Talk all same along Sinni (Sydney). Duclos, he try plenty hard to buy many lagoon so he can work um pearl himself. I think suppose I find lagoon I can sell to Duclos at good top price. I speak him along that away. Maybe you got lagoon, Purikia, you like sell? Duclos, he got plenty money!"

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"*Aore,*" negatived the chief. The contract with Jarvis was a good one, he reflected, though if many more pearls were found like the pink one Kiro had smuggled across from Pauatea the night before he was sorry he had not at least held out for a full half-share.

"Well, I hardly thought you had anything," said Shiels. "I dropped in here first to say '*Aroha*' before I go on Tonga way to see what I can find. Then I come back pretty soon when copra all dry and take cargo. I got something fine to show you, Purikia. Maybe you like buy."

Purikia had money but he was as careful with it as Captain Shiels. He grunted.

"You savvy *fotografi*, Purikia? *Pikitura e te ra* (sun pictures)?"

The chief nodded.

"This *papalangi* magic *fotografi pikitura.* All same you see um people walk, run. I show you big *mangu-motu* (bird-ship); plenty big steamer-*motu;* oh, my word, plenty more big along *Beritani* gunboat. I show you plenty *Beritani* (British) fighting-men. Then I show you very fine dance all same along *hula,* all same Tonga *tau-tau.* Very fine *fahine* she dance. My word, plenty fine machine."

"Why you no give me present?"

"Oh, this cost too plenty much money. Suppose you like, I sell you cheap."

"When you show?"

"To-night I show, in store-house. Yo tell everybody come to see walkabout *pikitura.*"

"Allri!"

"Is Kiro here? I like him; he help with *pikitura* machine. He learn how to work, suppose you buy."

Purikia nodded.

"I go ashore now," he said. "Tonight I see *pikitura e te ra.*"

"Bronson," said Shiels after the chief had gone over-side, "you can cut along and cultivate the village beauties as soon as you like. Be on hand to run the pictures; and, Sanders, you'd better go with him and see Kiro, to get the store-house fixed for the show. Pump Kiro for all he's worth about what happened on Pauatea. And, Bronson, stay clear of that native liquor; it's a bit hasty wi' a stranger to it."

NO OUTPOST hamlet ever accorded such wonderment, such enthusiasm, to its first "movie" as did the chocolate-colored citizens of Tirau.

An empty copra-shed had been transformed into an auditorium, with seats placed midway for better perspective, where sat in state Purikia, Captain Shiels with Sanders and the two mates, the queens, the royal mothers-in-law, and the petty chiefs and their wives. In this royal box refreshments passed as freely as at any cabaret or music-hall. The rest of the big shed, behind the distinguished guests, was filled with the village rabble and the Tahitian sailors from the *Lassie Mine,* a-squat upon mats, excited, voluble and happy.

Kiro stood by Bronson, ready to be initiated into the mysteries of the machine. The pictures were projected on a great sheet of white bark-cloth.

A film of the Zeppelin air-ship, after the first cries of "*E te mangu!*" left the audience stupefied. They saw, they must believe, and the Tahitian sailors, hitherto privately set down as liars by the Tirauans when they told of the wonders they had seen on their travels, were triumphant with their "told you so's." *Eyah,* but this was magic! Did not the *papalangi* walk in and out of the great bird's stomach? It must be a bird, though it had no wings. Did it not fly? *Eyah!*

The review of the American Round-the-World fleet in Sydney Harbor was closer to their comprehension. These war-canoes were very big—bigger than the *Beritania* gunboat which came once in a while to Tirau with idle and vexatious questions concerning runaway sailors and complaining skippers; but after all they were only canoes, made large by *papalangi* magic. The mechanical wonder of the moving film failed to excite. That, too, was *papalangi* magic, like the *fonografi* and the *fotografi*—to be marveled at and admired, but not to be understood.

Maybe Purikia savvied. Kiro too perhaps, a little, for he was to run this *pikitura* machine presently, he said. It was all to be wondered at and enjoyed. But it was purely the subject that appealed.

The film of the Gordon Highlanders, with their waving kilts, their swinging sporrans, their fur busbies, their martial stride, had to be repeated. The costume of the regiment—somewhat barbaric on its own account—went straight to the heart of Tirau, and Purikia was open in his delight.

But when Fatima, late of State Street, Chicago, divested herself gradually of what

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she deemed superfluous clothing, unabashed before the hookah-puffing blacks—barbers' porters out of a job—and displayed her full repertoire of muscular and nervous control, the excitement was intense. Some of the *fahines* who aspired to the position of *première danseuse* of the Tirau ballet, experts in the *hula* and the *tau-tau*, affected uncomplimentary remarks, but they fell on deaf ears.

That a *fahine papalangi* should out-twist, out-wiggle and out-pose anything ever seen on South Sea beaches was inconceivable! But that wonderful final, rhythmic, comprehensive shiver from finger-tips to toe-points, that "shaking like a tree in the wind! *Eyah!*"

Fatima displayed her accomplishments five times before Purikia could do aught but gesture appealingly for more. His eyes bulged from their sockets like those of an octopus. Shiels finally persuaded him the show was over by telling him the machinery had run down.

"*Eyah!*" exclaimed the monarch. "What name that *fahine papalangi?* Where she live?"

Shiels glimpsed a swift vision of some stage-worn Fatima installed as queen of Tirau, of Purikia subdued in his old age by a faded Vivien. He thought of trade-privileges destroyed, of prices quartered——

"She *mate* (dead)," he said promptly.

"*Mate? Auwe!*"

"Yes, she *mate.* She dance too much."

"Plenty too bad she *mate.* How much you want this *pikitura e te ra?*"

"We'll talk business tomorrow, Purikia. I'll have to think it over. Glad you liked it. Good night."

ON THE flood, by moonlight, four hours after midnight, came Joey, sailing one of the *Bonnie Dundee's* whale-boats from Pauatea, alone. He boarded the schooner unobserved by the sleeping village and encountered Johnson, keeping a drowsy and perfunctory watch on deck.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the mate. "You tumble below and rouse Captain Shiels right away. That's his orders."

"What's all the news, Joey?" asked the blinking skipper. "Thought you'd be here last night!"

"No could get away. Kanaka plenty much walk about, plenty talk along find um pearl. Kiro, he find um big pearl where I put. Then he speak *Kapitani* Karavisi (Jarvis), he plenty sick, take um canoe, come along Tirau. I put more pearl in shell. Three, four more Tirau *tangata* they find. Some I see thatatime they find, some Karavisi he see, some Mistah Murrei (Murray) he see. Some Kanaka hide um pearl in hair, in *liku* (loin-cloth), in mouth. Plenty much talk. Eight bell come, *Kapitani* speak. 'You dam Kanaka you go *moe-moe* (sleep).' Pretty soon all sleep. I get boat; I come Tirau."

"Good work, Joey! You catch whisky and go forward. Remember you tell Kiro, you tell ev'rybody you run away along of me because I too much mad at you. Then you come back along Captain Jarvis he too much plenty devil-mad all time at you too."

"Karavisi, he swear at me all time," chuckled Joey, smacking his lips over his drink.

"So you come back along of me. You find this pearl—" Shiels held up a pear-shaped pink mock pearl—"then you take um boat and come back show me this pearl you find. This pearl you keep till tomorrow; I speak, you show. Yes, you can have another drink. Tomorrow you come along with me on beach."

WITH Joey in tow, Captain Shiels descended upon Purikia the following day as that chief was taking his morning's morning of a "coconut fizz" (a young nut picked in the dawn and kept cool beneath banana leaves till wanted. To its opalescent, slightly effervescent contents, add a measure of gin—Purikia put bitters too. Then drink—and ask for another). Judging by Purikia, the effect is a complete offset to ante-noon vapors.

"You think how much you ask for *pikitura e te ra?*" asked Purikia, whose dreams had been charmed by the ravishments of Fatima, turning his brain for the night into a kinetoscope.

"I like talk something else first," responded Shiels, and, calling Joey, stood by while the boatswain spun his yarn.

"Show the pearl, Joey," he commanded.

The Tahitian obeyed with well-feigned reluctance.

The pear-shaped pearl, imitation that it was, blushed to find itself in the dusky, sweaty hollow of Purikia's paw as the chief

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viewed its symmetry and luster with unconcealed delight.

"*Kapitani* Karavisi he promise me one a quarter all pearl he find," he said covetously.

"That's all right. You keep that along your share. Give it up, Joey; you stole it," he added quickly as his henchman prepared to overact. "Now you get along out of this."

"Man Purikia!" he exclaimed, as the Tahitian left the cabin of "Jarvis' Folly." That Jarvis is a robber. Only gives you a quarter. He's a bandit!"

"He pay me, too," said Purikia, looking lovingly at the gem.

"I don't care if he pays you two hundred dollars a month. It's just plain stealing. Look here; Duclos will give half the pearls and pay five hundred. You and me'll split the money as my share for making the deal. Your half of the pearls, if they're anything like that, will make you rich enough to buy a big ship like the *Lassie Mine*. Buy all Levuka, suppose you like."

Purikia pondered. If there were many pearls like this—and the other that Kiro had brought—why split with Duclos or Shiels either? If he could break his contract with Jarvis before he cleared up the patch?

Shiels, watching narrowly, broke in upon his meditations.

"I don't want to knock Jarvis, Purikia, but you ken he's no friend of yours. It stands to reason he owes you a turn for the loss of his ship. He'll not play fair with you and I'm not going to stand by and see you swindled. You got a long lease along of him?"

"Lesi? One month, then one month more, so long he pay."

"You go over to Pauatea. Don't tell Jarvis I'm here, of course. You buy him off. Then you tell me when all fix. I go along Tahiti, see Duclos, make him sign paper."

Purikia still turned the pearl over thoughtfully in his palm.

Shiels recognized the crux of the situation. He was confident under the circumstances that the idea of artificial pearls had never entered the mind of the chief. But he guessed what was passing in the native's mind.

"Never mind," he said, rising. "It's your business. I don't see how you can lose, and of course I'd like to make some money and I thought you'd like to get all you could. It's a gamble. I can find something along Tonga way, I guess. I think Jarvis he find most of the pearls already maybe."

This was sooth. Scarce one oyster in two hundred holds any kind of a pearl, and the odds were against the Pauatea remnant yielding many more gems.

"I guess I go Tonga next tide, then," said Shiels. "I don't figure I can give you that *pikitura* machine, Purikia, though I'd like to. But I sell it at cost, if you want it."

"How much?"

"Five hundred pounds I pay at Sydney." He had actually paid Jarvis twenty for the outfit.

Purikia gazed at the pearl. Its pink shape seemed to turn to the body of Fatima. The dancing *fahine* was *mate*, but he could have her ghost to make the *papalangi hula* for him at will—always! Also it would make him very famous when other chiefs came along. He could not give her up.

"Humph!" he said. "Suppose I fix um with Karavisi, you give me this *pikitura* machine? Then you get money from your friend in Tahiti in two month."

"He's no friend of mine. Duclos he buy plenty much pearls all time along Tuamotus, Marquesas, Fiji—everywhere. No, I can't do that. Two month, patch all gone. Then you get um pearl, you get um *tala*, you catch *pikitura* machine, I get nothing. I lose what I pay for machine. Suppose you fix Jarvis I give you machine *hapa*-price. I take chance with you. I sell you for two hundred and fifty pounds."

"Suppose you take this a pearl?"

"Sure! That goes. No, I can't do that. I'd have to show it to Duclos and he'll hold it for first-find before he'll make a deal. No! Two hundred and fifty cash."

There was plenty of gold in Purikia's cash-box, and Shiels knew it. So at last the bargain was completed and the chief prepared to depart for Pauatea that afternoon, prompted by thoughts of pink pearls of price being pocketed hourly by Jarvis.

"Take back Jarvis' whale-boat with you," advised Shiels. "That'll put him in a good humor. You can come back in the canoe with your own men. If the tides are right, you'll be back here long before Jarvis starts. He'll have to break camp anyway. We'll show Kiro how to run the *pikitura* machine good while you're gone."

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JARVIS was on hand as Purikia entered the little lagoon at Pauatea. All hands were hard at work on the beach, where the stench of rotting shell arose almost visibly.

"Let's get over to wind'ard," he suggested, "and have some gin and bitters. Got my boat, I see, that Joey swiped. You needn't have troubled to bring it back. Thanks!"

Purikia secured several drinks before plain speech might offset Jarvis' hospitality. Jarvis winked at Murray, his supercargo, who left them, muttering something about the men.

"You find um plenty pearl?" asked Purikia.

"Quite a few. Quite a few. You come along get your share? I keep um all along ship. What's the matter, Jim?"

"Can you come over here for a minute?" asked Murray.

"Sure. Just a minute, Purikia."

"Got to give him a chance to talk to his own men, Jim," he said to his supercargo.

"Sure thing. Wonder how he liked the movies."

"Well," said Jarvis rejoining the chief, "suppose we go aboard. I show you pearl."

His determination strengthened by the revelations of his islanders, and a hasty glance taken in the lagoon that showed him more than half of the patch still intact, Purikia surveyed Jarvis coldly.

"I go ship, catch um my pearl," he said. "Then I like you stop work along Pauatea."

"You mean no more work after this month he stop? Well I guess I can hurry and clean up by then."

"*Aore!* You stop right along now!"

Jarvis stopped at the water's edge and looked blankly at Purikia.

"See here, Purikia," he said, "you're crazy! I pay you second time one month advance two weeks ago. I've *paid* for the next two weeks. They *belong* to me."

"I give you back twenty pound."

"No you don't! A bargain's a bargain. We'll go aboard and thrash this all out, after I give you your share of pearls to date."

THIRTY-THREE false but fair pearls lay on a square of black cloth on the cabin table of the *Bonnie Dundee*, shaming a pint of distorted baroques and a couple of small white pearls by the sheer insolence of their man-made luster. A tumbler, half full of seed-pearls, completed the clean-up.

"Take any eight, Purikia," said Jarvis. "Or we'll choose in turn."

With glistening eyes Purikia separated the eight finest-looking pearls from the rest—two pink, four gleaming white globes and two pink pears of shimmering outline. He was a good judge of pearl-values, and he knew that these should represent to him at least six hundred golden sovereigns.

As his long fingers touched the gems with surprising lightness and dexterity, he stiffened his mind for the usurpation, if necessary, of the balance of Jarvis' contract. His islanders had told him that it was in the very last batch dived for that the sudden crop of pearls had appeared. There were probably thirty, perhaps fifty, more to be discovered. Thoughts of Sahili and his friend at Tahiti, the vision of Fatima, faded before his covetousness.

"Take one more," said Jarvis. "I'll take the seeds and the baroques."

Purikia accepted without demur. One more perfectly round pink pearl was added to his eight.

"Now, then, what about this business of quitting?" asked the skipper, pushing the nearly emptied squareface across the table and handing over the bitters.

"I no like you work Pauatea pearl. I like you stop right along this day. I give you back *tala*."

"That ain't fair! You didn't kick until we struck luck. *You* didn't work the patch. *I* did. It was *my* luck found the pearls. You've got your share, and now you want to bust the contract and hog the rest. It ain't right, and you know it."

"I no want you work Pauatea pearl," repeated Purikia doggedly.

"Well, it's no use fighting over it. I'm just starting in again and I want your trade and good-will. But you'll have to pay me right for my two weeks."

"How mich?"

"Here are thirty-three pearls already. Your men stole prit' near a dozen more. Yes, they did. I ain't blind. Kiro got away with some. You'll get most of them. Call it forty, all told, perfect. Average up, say, fifty pound apiece. That's 'way under. Two thousand pounds. And we just struck the rich part of the patch. With what you've got, over and above what I give you

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for your share, you'll clean up five thousand pounds. Give me fifteen hundred and I'll call it off."

"You all same *pupure* (crazy)," said Purikia, helping himself to the rest of both bottles.

"You've got a thousand pounds' worth of pearls as good as in your hand right now."

"Suppose I give you all my pearl?"

"Nothing doing," said Jarvis firmly. "I need cash. If I took pearls, I'd have to hold 'em or let 'em go cheap before the market booms. Cash now is worth twice to me what it would be later on. I ain't rich like you are. I have to pay for my new schooner."

Purikia sat impassive.

"D'ye mind changing seats, Purikia? I want to get a fresh bottle out of the locker you're sitting on. Take my chair."

Purikia transferred his length about the table and sat down again, resolute to get the patch on better terms. Suddenly he gasped and leaned his elbows on the table.

"Eh, *Kapitani*, what um that?"

"What?" said Jarvis, turning his head and preparing to strike, now that the fish had taken the real lure. "Oh, that! That *pikitura* of *papalangi hula*-dancer. Her name Fatima."

"Fatima!" sighed the chief, business forgotten in the lure of sex. "Fatima! Where you get?"

"I buy that in Sinni," answered Jarvis truthfully. "Very fine *pikitura*. Very fine *fahine*."

"*Ai*," assented the chief, devouring the gaudy three-sheet with his eyes as it hung on the cabin wall. It wasn't as real as the lady of the walkabout *pikitura*, but it seemed to make the fair one of his dreams more tangible.

"That *fahine*, she *mate?*"

"*Mate?* Lord, yes. She's been a dead one for years. You like *pikitura?*"

"You give?" Purikia's chest heaved with emotion.

"Maybe. Suppose you give me fifteen hundred along pearls."

Purikia's commercial conscience groaned, but his heart protested against parsimony in such matters. He had almost overlooked the fact that if he did not close with Jarvis the walkabout *pikituras* would not be sold him by Shiels. Now he would lose this fine *pikitura* in colors, like life. The river of elderly love is full of snags. Fatima danced before his eyes, posturing, wiggling, and with that final wonderful, comprehensive shiver. *Eyah!* And the pearls, those already his and those to come!

"I give you one thousand pound," he said. "Not one a —— penny more."

Jarvis saw that the limit had been reached.

"Done!" he said, and reached his hand across to close the bargain. "Stay over and go back with me tomorrow. Glad to have you."

"*Aore*. I must go along Tirau now," said Purikia, drooling mentally for a run of the famous harem film.

"All right, if you must. I won't need your men any longer. I owe you something for them. About four hundred dollars. We'll fix it all up when I get back to Tirau. Take along the bottles for your trip."

THERE were no signs of the *Lassie Mine* when the *Bonny Dundee* arrived from Pauatea in Tirau lagoon. Captain Shiels had collected his two hundred and fifty pounds and departed, ostensibly to seek Duclos in Tahiti—in reality bound for Levuka, there to await the coming of Captain Jarvis.

Jarvis duly received his nine hundred odd pounds from Purikia, who, witnessing the contortions of Fatima at will, with Kiro as operator, hardly sensed the depletion of his ready cash. The chief calculated that Shiels' friend in Tahiti would soon replenish the exchequer—and meantime Fatima was his! The poster was hung in the cabin of the stranded schooner; Purikia's days passed in hoping that night and darkness would come quickly so that he might once more gaze upon the dancer.

"I suppose you'll have to go back and bluff things out to save your trade," said Jarvis to Shiels later, in a Levuka snuggery sacred to skippers. "I told Purikia I'd be back in two weeks, but I don't intend to. I shall try and pick up my old trade over at the Marquesas and cut out the Fijis. I hate the sight of Tirau anyway. I'd like to sneak ashore some night and burn up my old schooner; then I'd be satisfied."

"I'll go back, of course," responded Shiels, carefully counting the sovereigns handed to him by Jarvis. "There's some French money here, Jarvis, but we'll let it go. Eighty-eight pounds you paid him for labor. That leaves nine hundred and

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twelve. Correct. I'm charging my general expense against the regular trip, so there's nothing else to deduct. It's a fair profit."

"Man," he continued, "this has been a grand thing for you! You're skipper once more of a fine craft, and your course is set for a fortune once again. You can start out clear over your old grounds. You're fair rehabilitated. Ye'll be buying the schooner from me at the end of the season. I'll let you have her cheap. As for the little matter of fifty pounds you owe me——"

"Fifty I owe you!" exclaimed Jarvis. "You're raving! What about my share in the deal and me doing most of the work? There's four hundred and fifty coming to me, I'm thinking."

"Ye're forgetting the charter-money for the *Bonny Dundee*, Captain Jarvis. Five hundred pounds for the season, and cheap at that. Payable in advance, though I've waited two months for my money, to say naught of the credit ye got at Sydney for your stores, on my word."

"It's a robbery!" said Jarvis excitedly. "The schooner's nothing better than a painted crate. I was working half the crew at the pumps all the way down. She'll not last the season, and you couldn't insure her for the price of her sails."

"Tut, tut, man! Ye're naught but a mass of ingratitude. I take ye from a losing business on shore and set ye up at sea again, an' ye cavil at gettin' it all wi'out expending a penny. As for the schooner, handle her canny an' she's a grand boat. I paid ye twenty pound for your picture-machine, so ye'll no' be wanting ready cash. I'm fair disappointed in ye. But I'll forego the fifty pounds, so that you can na' say there's aught that's sma' about John Wilson Shiels."

He got up, leaving Jarvis groping for fitting words and breath to deliver them.

"The miserly, cramp-souled, tin-horn imitation of a swab!" he finally exploded to "Levuka Louis," as the latter collected the bill for drinks that Shiels had failed to settle.

"Le Capitain Shiels is a verree smart man," said Louis. "Oh, verree smart, but a leetle, what you call—stingy; eh?"

"I'll get even with him," vowed Jarvis, his inflamed countenance turning purple. "If that worm-bitten, dry-rotted schooner he's saddled me with keeps on top of the water for the season and I can get a start again, I'll show him where the 'smart' comes in. The heartless herring-eater!"

"THAT feckless ne'er-do-weel Bronson is ashore drunk an' disorderly," said Sanders to his skipper later that evening. "I've left Joey to bring him aboard before they clap him in the calaboose, though I misdoubt but that would be the best place for him."

"I sent him up to the show-house to see if he could get hold of a film," replied Shiels. "We'll be needing something with which to propeetiate Purikia when he finds there are no more pearls in the patch, and I break the news to him that Duclos had a sudden call to Samoa. To say nothing of what he'll say when he finds out the pearls are fake."

"He'll blame all that on Jarvis," said Sanders.

"I rather imagine he will," replied his skipper. "As for Bronson, I've given my word to take him back to Sydney, and we'll be needing him to run the new film and fix up the machine. It's in my mind that Kiro has broken some reels by this time."

"Here he is now," said Sanders, "to judge by the racket."

The voice of Bronson was heard expostulating with Joey as to his capability to walk alone. Then a pair of apparently boneless legs encased in wrinkled, dirty ducks appeared gropingly on the companionway. These miraculously managed to bear their owner to the table, where he stood swaying gently, his eyes glazed, his tie tucked into the neck of his wilted collar, an aura of liquor surrounding him.

"Here'sh film, shir," announced the operator. "Bu'ful film."

His eyes closed and he seemed to fall asleep.

"Wake up, man!" exclaimed Shiels. "Ye're drunk!"

"Who? Me?" expostulated Bronson, as he opened his eyes and made a sudden grab at the table. "Funny, this motion. Thought we wash anchored. Drunk? No, shir! Jes lillul bit con-convivyul. Met ol', ol' fr'en', whosh operator. Gave me magnifshunt film. Life of Jenny Dark. She'sh Frensh he—he—hic!—heroine. Bu'ful pictures—knights in armor, kingsh, swordsh an' lanches—lancesh an' fightsh. An' the pore lillul gal, skipper!" His eyes filled with tears that dripped on the table as he bent above it, gripping the edge. "The pore

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lillul gal, they cooked her like a blooming crab! All in her armor, skipper, jush like a lillul, lillul crab!"

"You go to bed, my lad," said Shiels. "Sanders, put him in his bunk."

TO THE utter astonishment of Captain Shiels, he found Purikia in the best of humor. The Make-Weight had, according to the chief, lived up to its promises, and he had gained ten pounds. He accepted the Jeanne d'Arc film with gratitude, and almost wept on Bronson's neck when the latter promised to mend the Fatima film, which had been torn beyond the repair of Kiro. Even the announcement that the deal for Pauatea was off, owing to Duclos having unexpectedly gone to Apia, failed to shake the chief's good nature.

"What for plenty trouble you make walkabout, *Kapitani?*" he said amiably. "S'pose you lose um *tala*, s'pose I lose, what for too much *oiritea?* That no matter too much along friends. We all shake hand; take um drink."

This unprecedented indifference to finances on the part of the chief fairly staggered Shiels for the moment. Then a disagreeable suspicion forced itself upon him.

"Purikia," he asked, "you find plenty pearl along Pauatea after I go?"

"*Aore!* Not very plenty um pearl. Some *lele* pearl I get; some *baroki*. Only one nice pearl Kiro find.

"Too much funny, I think," he went on. "You savvy never I see pink pearl in Fiji before that a time Karavisi he find. Some pink pearl Tuamotu maybe; maybe Tonga. No pink pearl I ever see any place belong along me. Plenty white, some-a-time black. This-a-time, after Karavisi he leave, in last shell maybe, Kiro he find this."

He opened the little wall-safe in the cabin of the stranded schooner, once sacred to Jarvis' treasures, and took from it something that he laid on the cabin table.

It was a black pearl! None of the little cockney's faking, but a genuine pearl, the size of a small walnut, perfect in its oval, the curves of it filmed by the shimmer of its orient. The deep, warm black of the skin seemed covered with opalescent bloom.

It was worth a king's ransom! It was a gem that held no fixed value. A monarch would eventually buy it and its price would be set down among the catalogues of the richest gems of the world. And this Jarvis had left on the lagoon-beach at Pauatea for Kiro to discover for Purikia!

Shiels swallowed hard and looked covertly at Sanders.

"Pretty nice pearl, Purikia," he said at last, when he thought he could trust his voice. "I'll give you five hundred for it, offhand. Pounds, I mean."

"*Aore,*" announced Purikia, putting back the gem in the safe and shutting the door. "I no sell. I keep. Bimeby I think maybe I go Tahiti. Maybe your friend he come back then, Sahili."

"I got present for you," he went on, taking up a little package done up in *tapa*-cloth and setting it in front of the skipper. "You take along. Now we have one drink all round and shake hand, all good friend."

They drank in silence and the skipper and the supercargo left the schooner together, dazed, followed by Bronson, who had fixed the film, and walked dejectedly toward their boat.

At the water's edge Kiro overtook them.

"Purikia he speak you leave um this," he said, handing the skipper the little packet which he had inadvertently left on the table. Shiels dropped it mechanically into his pocket.

"What do you suppose that pearl's worth, Captain?" asked Sanders, after the two had been fortified with Scotch aboard the *Lassie Mine.*

"Ten thousand — twenty — fifty — *any* price! I'm sorry I'm no' apt at the sweiring, Sanders. Get me a cigar."

He fumbled in his pockets for a match and found the neglected package.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he said, opening it and pushing it across the table. "Look at that!"

In the center of the folds of white bark-cloth were some two-score of what had once seemed fair pearls. Their false beauty had departed; their smooth symmetry was despoiled. Each wax-backed, fish-scaled surface bore the imprints of Fijian teeth!

"Purikia!" exclaimed Sanders. "Well, blast his eyes!"

"Blast his infernal teeth, you mean," said Shiels. "May he have an ulcer in the heart of every one of them. I'm no' a passionate man, Sanders, but I hope I have the chance to pull some of 'em for him some day!"

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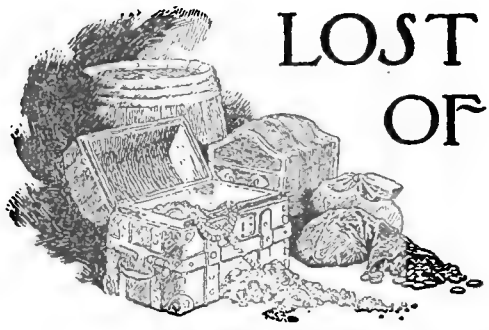

LOST TREASURES OF THE WORLD

AN ARTICLE III.

By Stephen Allen Reynolds

Author of "The Man with the D. S. O.," "Providence and the Green Apples," etc.

IN THE preparation of this article on lost treasures the author has consulted hundreds of magazine and newspaper clippings, and scores of published volumes on the subject.

Many letters have been written addressed to persons at home and abroad—persons in a position to know the facts concerning specific treasures. In fact all available sources of information have been consulted in an effort to have the articles both up to date and authentic. Yet, owing to the very nature of the subject, neither the author, the editor nor the publisher can guarantee as authoritative these stories of hidden and sunken riches. On the other hand, simply because all responsibility is disclaimed, there is no reason to suppose that the accounts which follow are untrue. Naturally, were the treasures easily gotten at, they would all have been lifted long ago. The mere fact that a treasure has not been found is not conclusive proof that it does not exist.

At least a conscientious effort has been made to cover the entire field as thoroughly and reliably as possible, so that the result may stand in the future as a comprehensive reference on the entire subject of lost treasure.

To those of you who are less interested in the practical value of such a gathering of stray facts and half-forgotten traditions than in the romance inevitably attached to them, the following accounts will have strong story-value. In all the scope of adventure and romance there is, perhaps, no phrase more stimulative to the imagination than those two words, "hidden treasure."—EDITOR'S NOTE.

BURIED GOLD IN THE LAND OF THE AZTECS

ACCORDING to the evidence in the "Cartas de Cortes" ("Letters of Cortes"), written in or about 1622, we have sufficient proof that gold-mines of fabulous richness actually existed in the land of the Montezumas, and that some of them were located by the followers of the Spaniard. Cortes himself, as soon as he became possessed of the person of Montezuma, as he relates in his "Letters," demanded the chart of tribute symbols, and availed of their information to his advantage.

Notwithstanding that he obtained from Montezuma a roomful of treasure, chiefly consisting of gold, hammered into images and cast in bars, the Spanish conqueror was not satisfied. He learned that this vast treasure was mainly the accumulation of Montezuma's father, the warrior-king Axaycatl, the dreaded "Water Face," who had taken his armies far south, even to the confines of Guatemala, and had there discovered the "Golden Region."

At the request of Cortes the captive Montezuma furnished guides, and four parties were sent out, each party composed of two soldiers and an Indian. Eventually all returned with as much precious metal as they could carry. It was only in the south, however, that the rich mines were found, in the provinces of Tasco and Malinaltepec; in the former gold in considerable quantities, and in the latter mines which had been rudely worked for centuries—alluvial mines of the richest washings.

In his "Letters," Cortes goes on to say that he sent out a second expedition to relocate and work the mines, but it was destroyed by the fierce warriors of the Oaxaca hills, who also obliterated all signs of the gold-mines so that they have never been found nor worked since.

Some twenty years ago the late Porter C. Bliss, a ripe scholar and antiquarian, came across an old chart which seemed full of promise in the matter of pointing out where these rich old mines lay. While

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delving among musty tomes in a Mexican library he brought to light an ancient chart, evidently printed from engraved blocks.

According to an inscription on the old document it was the work of one Domingo del Castillo, a pilot, and was made, "in Mexico, in the year of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, MDXLI." That date was within twenty years of the conquest of Mexico by Cortes, and while the knowledge of picture-writing was still available, for, attached to the chart was a series of symbols, after the manner of the celebrated Mexican picture-writing.

This portion was entitled (as rendered into English), "Fragments of a Map or Chart of the Tribute Taxes, Showing the Chain of Towns which Paid Tribute to the Great Emperor, Montezuma, by the Natives in their Paganism, and the Character, Quality, etc., of said Contributions, as Expressed in Tribute Symbols."

To any one acquainted with the history of the conquest, this "find" would appear invaluable on the face of it, since it is well known to students of Mexican history that Montezuma rendered vast amount of tribute to the Spanish conqueror, and must have derived his great stores of gold from certain provinces of the empire over which he ruled. This chart, then, was in the nature of a long-missing link in the chain of evidence which was to connect the present silver age of Mexico with its golden past. Furthermore, sketched upon the chart itself, was a map of the ancient province of Malinaltepec, marked some eighty Mexican leagues distant from the Aztec capital at a point seventy miles from the southern city of Oaxaca.

Not long after the "find," three Americans left the city of Oaxaca to search for the lost mines of the conjectural Malinaltepec district. With Porter Bliss was the late Frederick A. Ober, the eminent historian and ornithologist, and another companion. Said Ober, in writing of the treasure quest: "Our trip necessitated nearly a thousand miles of the roughest travel on horseback and muleback, and brought us into the hills where dwelt the semi-savage Zapotecs, Mixtecs and Mixes. Some of them had never seen an English-speaking white man up to that time, and some of them had the reputation of being ritual cannibals, but they all guarded closely the secret of the lost mines and hoards.

"We reached finally the hills above the wretched little Indian town of Cuilapan, which had been a center of Zapotec civilization in ancient times, and where stands a convent once endowed by Cortes. Before we left town, and after we have been treated to *mescal* and *tequilla*, the priest, who lived here all alone, took us to the dome of the convent, whence he pointed out to us more than twenty Indian mounds, which, he said, were reputed to contain golden treasure. Each mound was the center of an Indian village, and if we could get permission, he told us to dig into the mound at Qualicha, where we should find something that would well reward us for all our trouble.

"Following his directions, we rode through half-submerged corn-fields over narrow trails to the village of Qualicha, where we dined with the local priest to whom we had been given a note of introduction. We mentioned our desires to the priest, who held up his hands in horror at the mere suggestion of disturbing that ancient mound, which was regarded with reverential awe by all his Indian subjects. At the same time, while protesting that excavations there would be impossible, he whetted our curiosity by telling us that at one time some antiquarians had dug into it superficially, and found there a tomb containing several tiers of metal platters, upon each platter a skull, besides many idols of stone and clay. But, he added, as soon as the Indians learned what was going on, they assembled in force, and drove away the desecrators of their sacred cemetery, with threats of death should they ever return.

"Our leader, Mr. Bliss, wisely held his design of excavating here in abeyance; but, to show how penetrative was his prescience, and how profound his knowledge of Mexican history, even of the aboriginal traditions, I may add that, several years later, the mound was opened by orders from the Mexican Government, and a vast treasure found within. Many a time after that visit have we lamented our ready acquiescence in the desire of the priest to let the mound alone, for the subsequent explorers discovered there two-score golden plates, each with skulls and nuggets on it, to the value of more than $25,000, reckoning the intrinsic worth of the gold alone!"

That many other mounds still exist in the vicinage, is a cold fact. That the mines of

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Montezuma really exist, awaiting their rediscovery, is likewise a certainty. Possibly, with the aid of the picture-puzzle found by Porter Bliss, some person may one day revel in untold wealth.

Frederick Ober failed in his search for the mines and hoards, but he discovered, to use his own words, that, "the Indians yet living in the vicinity of the traditional mines were as valiant and seclusive as their most ferocious ancestors, who, according to the accounts of Cortes, wielded spears so long and so heavy that Spanish foot-soldiers could not prevail against them."

One hears in Mexico tales of vast riches buried by religious orders when menaced by war or expulsion. One of these hoards is to be found in the southwestern part of the state of Chihuahua where a great gorge is cut by the Rio Verde. In this remote valley are the ruins of a church built by the Jesuits, and when they were about to be driven from their settlement it is said they sealed up and destroyed all traces of a fabulously rich mine in which was buried millions in bullion.

Instead of the more or less stereotyped ghosts familiar as sentinels over buried treasures, these lost hoards of Mexico are haunted by a specter even more disquieting than phantom pirates; or "little black men." It is "The Weeping Woman" who makes strong men cross themselves and shiver in their *serapes*, and many have heard or seen her. A member of a party seeking buried treasure in the heart of the Sierra Madre solemnly affirmed as follows:

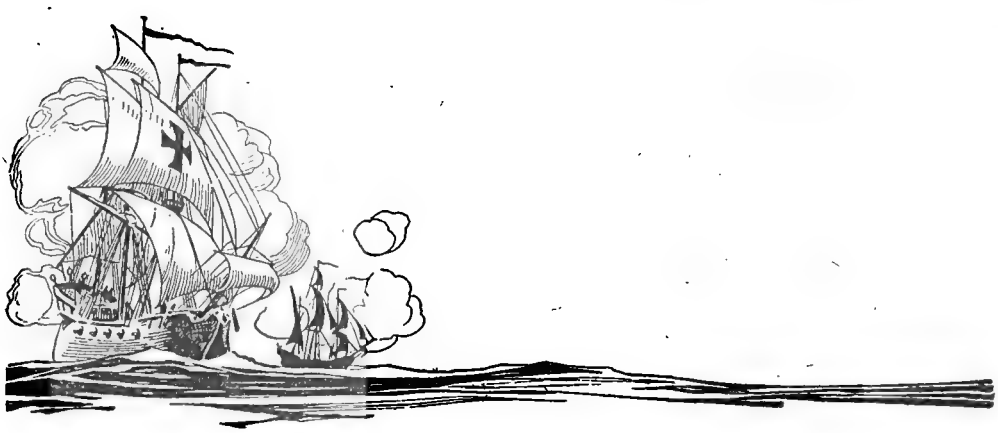
"We were to measure, at night, a certain distance from a cliff which was to be found by the relative positions of three tall trees. It was on a bleak table-land nine thousand feet above the sea. The wind chilled us to the marrow, although we were only a little to the north of the Tropic of Cancer. We rode all night and waited for the dawn in the darkest and coldest hours of these altitudes.

"By the light of pitch-pine torches we consulted a map and decided that we had found the right place. We rode forward a little and brushed against three soft warm things. Turning in our saddles, by the flare of our torches, held high above our heads, we beheld three corpses swaying in the wind. A wailing cry of a woman's voice came from close at hand, and we fled as if pursued by a thousand demons. My comrades assured me that the Weeping Woman had brushed past us in her eternal flight."

Perhaps no treasure story is so well authenticated as that of the Mugueres Island, a small island off the coast of Yucatan. The exploits of pirates and their buried stores of gold and gems are the inexhaustible sources of all the romantic stories that the Yucatan fishermen love to tell on moonlight nights, seated on the bottom of some boat turned up on the beach. They suspect that others dream of buried treasures as much as they do, for all strangers are closely watched.

A party of treasure seekers visited the Island of Mugueres about two years ago, and complained of the incessant watch kept upon them. Whichever way they strolled, some one kept them in view. Said Don Pedro Podebano, one of the oldest inhabitants: "They think you have come for the treasure, which they would never allow to be taken by a stranger."

According to Don Pedro, and, divested



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of his dialect, the story of the treasure runs as follows: "Nearly all of us are from Yallahu, on the opposite coast (Yucatan), but we always come here to fish. I was a little shaver when my uncle first brought me, yet I remember everything. One morning a schooner hove in sight. It soon cast anchor in the bay.

"There were armed men on board. They came ashore, but seemed not to notice us. We watched and saw them look all around. One evening when we returned to our camp we missed some Mexican bread and could not find out who had taken it. Next day the same thing happened, and so the next; then a boy was set to watch. He hid himself, saw an old man steal from the bush, snatch some bread and quickly retreat.

"My uncle resolved to capture the thief. Next day, we started in our boats as usual, but soon anchored in a small cove near by and walked to the camp, where we hid ourselves. We let the old man enter the hut, then we surrounded him and learned that he had come on board the schooner to show the others where a treasure was, he having seen it buried. Overhearing a conversation to kill him when the treasure was unearthed so that he might not demand his share, he ran away and hid in the woods, watching for our absence to procure food. He seemed greatly afraid of the companions he had left; so my uncle told him he was welcome to share with us, but he had better keep out of sight until the other schooner had gone.

"Very soon the treasure seekers went off to their ship, no richer than when they came, probably believing the old man dead; but he was hale and hearty with all his wits about him, though seventy years old. Concerning himself he said: 'When quite young I was kidnaped and taken on board a pirate ship, where I was made cabin-boy. One day the crew entered a city on the coast and sacked it, taking lots of gold coin and precious things from the churches, and the bishop's jewels. What a glittering pile it was! They put it all in boxes covered with lead and brought them here, landing on the north end of this island, where they dug a trench in the sand sixty steps from the water's edge. In the trench they laid the treasure and covered it with a piece of tarpaulin and a light coating of sand. Then the captain asked for volunteers to guard it.

"'Two negroes stepped forward and were instantly shot by the captain, who ordered their bodies to be thrown on the boxes, saying that they would take better care of them dead than alive, because any one finding bones would look no further. The trench was then refilled, and on it three stones were placed forming a triangle, a crowbar being buried ten steps from them. Our ship was soon afterward captured, and every one on board put to death except me, because I was young and had been kidnaped.'

"After much persuasion, he pretended to look for the treasure, but I think he feared to indicate the spot least we should kill him as the others had proposed to do, although we would not have hurt the old man. We took him to our village, and from there he went to Campeche, where he died. Nothing was heard about the treasure for several years, during which time we formed this village, when one day men arrived from Campeche, bringing a government permit to dig for it. All of the trenches back of the church were made by their order.

"They did not look at the north point of the island, but they were so sure of finding the money that they paid the people here, who worked for them, double the usual wages, and spent many dollars, going away much poorer, for they found nothing. They had lost a map, they said, that indicated the position of a high stone in front of which the boxes were buried.

"Another party came to search on the south side of the village, and the last comers looked in vain on the north point. In 1847, when the first settlers came, a youth, looking for firewood, let fall his long knife, and it struck something sounding like metal, which proved to be a crowbar. The youth took it away without marking the spot, for he had heard nothing about the treasure; and yet he was within ten steps of it. It can only be found by the one that it is intended for. Once I thought I had it. Digging to make the foundation of a house we came upon human bones; then I had an immense trench opened, but found nothing more."

In 1907 much excitement was caused near the city of Durango, Mexico, over the finding of hidden treasure worth more than $4,000,000 near Corral de Majoma, on the Hacienda el Ojo, in the Nombres de Dios district. The hacienda was owned by one Julio Curbelo. The Mexican Government sent fifty soldiers to the place to preserve order, while the treasure, consisting of gold

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images and idols, with a large crucifix of gold, together with a large number of silver bars, was removed under guard.

This treasure is said to have been hidden at Corral de Majoma by bandits many years ago. At one time cutthroats were very numerous throughout the district. A shepherd discovered the treasure and told of his find to the Alcalde, who immediately took steps to recover it.

In the early part of September, 1912, a Mexican banker, accompanied by an American named William Rogers and several laborers, proceeded to the interior of the state of Sonora, where, near a mountain ridge in Benito County, they unearthed $75,000 of buried treasure. According to Rogers, his employer carried a map showing the location of the treasure, and no time was lost in reaching the spot.

The two Mexican laborers dug a hole eight feet deep in the ground at the foot of a huge oak, when the treasure-chest was brought to light. The find consisted of $10,000 in silver bullion, $65,000 in gold coin and ingots, and is said to have been buried by a Mexican outlaw named Vasquez, whose band operated in that region half a century ago.

THE LOOT OF MESSRS. MORGAN AND DRAKE

ALTHOUGH legend persists in saying so, it is quite certain that Morgan buried none of his vast treasures nor did he squander it in riotous living. From the looting of Panama alone he took booty to the value of two million dollars as his share. He had no need to hide it. He was thought so well of in England that Charles II. knighted him, and he was appointed Commissary of the Admiralty.

He lived for some time in England, published his "Voyage to Panama" in 1683, and spent his remaining years in Jamaica as an opulent and influential person, and a terror to the luckless, beggared comrades who had helped him win his fortune. As governor of Jamaica, in high favor with the ruling powers in England, Morgan had no need of secreting any of his booty.

With Sir Francis Drake, "sea king of the sixteenth century," matters were different, for it was highly probable that this great admiral left rich plunder hidden in the steaming jungle of the road he took to Panama. He had only forty-eight Englishmen with him when he led the famous raid on the Spanish treasure-train bound to Nombre de Dios, a century before Morgan's raiders crossed the Isthmus.

The first attempt to rob the Dons of their gold resulted in failure; but after sundry adventures, Drake returned and ambushed the trains at dawn. There were three trains traveling together, one of fifty mules, the others of seventy each, every one of them laden with three hundred pounds' weight of silver and gold bullion, some thirty tons in all. The guard of forty-five Spanish soldiers loafed along carelessly in front and rear, their guns slung on their backs.

Drake and his bold seamen poured down from a hill, put the guard to flight, and captured the entire caravan, with the loss of only two men. There was more plunder than they could well carry back to the ships in a hasty retreat, and being weary, they were content with a few bars and quoits of gold. The rest of the gold and silver was buried in the expectation of returning for it later, "partly in the burrows which the great land-crabs have made in the earth, and partly under old trees which are fallen thereabouts, and partly in the sand and gravel of a river not very deep of water."

On the forced march to the coast two of Drake's men fell out, and, we are told, fell into the hands of the Spaniards, who tortured them into revealing the places where the plunder had been hidden. At any rate, when Drake returned, he found "the earth every way a mile distant had been dug and turned up in every place of any likelihood to have anything hidden in it."

But the Englishmen poked around "and quickly found thirteen bars of silver and some few quoits of gold," with which they hastened away, fearing to linger long in the neighborhood of an overwhelming force of the enemy. It was their firm belief—a belief substantiated in a measure by Spanish records—that the Spaniards recovered by no means all of those tons of precious silver bullion and gold.

Therefore it is quite likely that a valuable hoard still awaits the search of some modern argonauts. This much is certain: that Sir Francis Drake is to be numbered among that romantic company of sea-rovers of

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other days who buried vast treasures upon the Spanish Main.

THE TREASURE OF POZO DE DONATO

FROM the sixteenth century to the twentieth is a far cry, but this particular romance of buried treasure that dates back to the conquest of the New Kingdom of Granada by the Spanish forces under General Gonzalo Jimenez de Quesada, is dignified by tradition and history, and is borne out by facts. The history of the long-hidden pond of Donato reads like a tale of "Monte Christo." Were it not for the authentic documents and records of early attempts to secure the treasure, it might pass as fantastic.

It is a matter of common knowledge that in the days of the Chibcha kings, one of the richest and greatest of them, the Zaque of Tunja, buried an immense amount of treasure, when threatened by Spanish invaders moving across the Saravido River toward Tunja, in the old Kingdom of Hunzahua, ninety-six miles from Bogotá, the present-day capital of the Republic of Colombia.

Images wrought in solid gold, uncut emeralds and diamonds from mines lost centuries ago, form the bulk of this treasure —a treasure of incalculable intrinsic value, apart from the premium it would doubtless fetch from lovers of the antique and unusual.

That the Zaque of Tunja actually buried his vast accumulation of treasure in a pond near his ancient palace, one may be brought to believe by consulting the official archives of the city of Tunja. This is borne out by the records and history of the Spanish invasion, written by General Quesada himself, the conqueror and historian of New Granada. Furthermore, the archives of Tunja show that numerous companies have been formed under official sanction, in years gone by, to secure this treasure, and that these companies have failed, because of the lack of capital and the necessary machinery to drain the lake.

That one Gomez de Cifuentes, a common soldier, under Quesada at the commencement of the conquest, must have had some idea of the location of the treasure, is apparent from the fact that he formed a company with one Catalina Rodriguez and a surgeon named Marcos Donato—from whom the lake is named—and proceeded to hunt for the body of water, which was eventually discovered between two small rivers, in a plain below the city of Tunja.

Cifuentes, it seems, through services and favors to the natives, made himself day after day more and more important, and eventually became the ruler of one of the numerous tribes of Paipa. He became rich, and built one of the best buildings in Tunja, "the old house with the tower," and died many years after.

This man, with the great influence he had over the Indians, ought to have obtained by some way, through some or one of them, knowledge of the secret place where the treasure was hidden. Moreover, being a soldier of Quesada, one who had acted at the time of the assault upon the Chibcha king's palace, he might have obtained proofs of the location and quantity of the treasure, although the records state that the Zaque was interrogated in this respect, and would not answer. Incidentally, the wealthy Zaque died at Suesca fifteen days or so after the storming of Tunja; his death, so it is said, caused by the tortures he underwent at the hands of the Spaniards.

At any rate, documents in the archives of Bogotá, show that a partner of Gomez de Cifuentes, the surgeon Marcos Donato, took possession of the lake some time after the disappearance of the treasure in the year 1537. Then, according to a tradition existing among the natives, the doctor scooped up some gold and emeralds from the shores of the lake, and exclaimed: "*Esto no me lo quitani Dios!*"—"Not even God can take this away from me!" The tradition then goes on to say that when the digger returned to continue his labors, he found the hole filled with water.

Everything in his power was done to remove the water, but without avail, for the water would not lower, though he had over a hundred Indians to bail it out. The natives attributed the overflow of water to a chastisement from Heaven, caused by the blasphemous exclamation made in the moment when the treasure was found.

It was in the year of 1571, upon the Twenty-third of August, when Marcos Donato, Catalina Rodriguez, and Gomez de Cifuentes registered a public document, requesting permission to "discover or uncover, and find a lake, which should be found in the outskirts

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of the city of Tunja." A later document, dated October first, 1572, says Marcos Donato took possession that day of a hill or mound very near the "Swamp of Tunja," a mound that looked unnatural, as if it had been made by hand. He took possession in order that he might dig a hole into this supposed "treasure deposit."

Yet another document states that the exact spot chosen by the Indians for the concealment of the wealth was the middle of a primitive lake. The description of the lake as compared with the position of the mound, would indicate that they were both one and the same thing—that the undrainable pond of Donato was a natural spring, once stopped up, reappearing after Donato's first work.

Be that as it may, the records do not show that the efforts of the three Spanish partners were attended with any substantial success. They had hoped to find "the immense raft of logs and blocks of stone," with which the henchmen of the Zaque had covered his treasure before sinking it, that the hated invaders might never recover it, even should they locate it.

Later on, but before Bolivar wrested Colombia from Spain, companies were organized by notable citizens of Tunja to continue the enterprise commenced by Gomez de Cifuentes and his partners. The stipulations of these companies appear in documents dated in March of 1734, and in November, 1733. But they were unsuccessful enterprises like the first. Then again, after the Colombian War of Independence, on two different occasions other companies were formed and work commenced. Nothing, however, was accomplished, and many years passed by.

In 1892, Señora Zoila Marino, owner of the property of the farm of "Las Cuadras," where the Pozo de Donato exists, invited an Englishman to organize a company to explore the lake. She had inherited the farm from her father, and had come into possession of many strange documents. Papers she submitted to the Englishman referred to the traditions of the lake, to the frequent finding of golden ornaments and images in the surroundings of the lake.

Acting upon this offer and information, Ernest Duperly, an English engineer, organized a company and began a technical exploration. But the amount estimated as sufficient to carry on the work was so large that the shareholders became alarmed, and all except Duperly's father-in-law and himself withdrew. Thus, the father-in-law, Don Basilo Augusyra, obtained the rights of Señora Marino to continue the work, and it was prosecuted with vigor until the funds gave out, when Mr. Duperly made an unsuccessful trip to the United States in an effort to raise more capital.

As to the exact amount of work accomplished, it might be well to quote Duperly himself. He is not a dreamer nor a romanticist. He is a very practical Englishman, who had brought into requisition modern drills and steam pumps to locate and raise the treasures of the Incas. That he actually found images wrought in solid gold, uncut emeralds and other precious stones—although not in sufficient quantities to defray the expenses of the quest—indicates that he has been hot upon the scent, that his labors have not entirely been in vain.

"Accurate surveys and findings were made to definitely locate the position of the palace of the king," says Duperly. "We wanted to learn also the lay of the ground, with view to the drainings of the lake. A wall was then built, enclosing the 'Pozo de Donato,' to keep out the curious and indiscreet. We then cleaned the lake of aquatic plants. The lake measures 214 feet in its widest, by 154 feet in its narrowest part. Its greatest depth is 51 feet, including a deposit of 17 feet of decomposed wood.

"The first substance extracted by our

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core drills was an inoffensive mud, of a greenish color, that turned black as it became exposed to the sunlight. This same mud kept coming up without interruption until we had reached a depth of 17 feet. From this depth downward another 17 feet we constantly found decomposed water-logged wood. The wood was of a dark color, resembling chocolate. It was recognized by experts of the place as 'Tobo,' a wood grown in a cold climate. Some fragments came out with its bark, others looked like limbs of a tree.

"The drilling was continued, and one foot of white and very clean sand of a thick grain was extracted. Immediately one could feel the drill rubbing against something hard and movable.

"The rotation then became difficult and unsteady, the descent very slow. On taking out the drill we found rounded stones of different colors, white, purple, chocolate and black. We bored five times with the drill, always encountering this mass of wood, unquestionably sunken there in 1637. The original raft built by the Zaque of Tunja must have taken some 75,000 or 80,000 logs to build. What a quantity of labor is represented in the cutting and transportation of so much timber, in times when the Indians knew nothing of an axe! Then again, the enormous deposit of stones upon this huge raft—stones which must have been taken from the banks of the Magdalena River near-by, since the drill failed to bring up stones of similar character when borings were made upon the shores of the lake.

"In 1895 we drained the lake, and placed 150 men at work digging a trench. Through mud and silt, and then down seventeen feet, we kept on until funds were exhausted. We found a few images of pure gold, a Chibcha idol studded with uncut emeralds, and a number of native trinkets and ornaments of the precious metal. These finds indicated that we were on the right track, but they were not of sufficient value to defray the expense of prosecuting the search. We had to give up. Men will not work without pay; a laborer is worthy of his hire."

One may ask: "And whence all this gold? Has not the amount of treasure in the Pozo de Donato been exaggeration?" Quesada's history answers well. His obligation to recognize, in favor of the King of Spain, one-fifth of the treasures gathered from the land conquered, puts him in a position to be exact, since if he had exaggerated he would naturally have been held responsible for a greater amount than what he was expected to deliver in Spain.

Quesada, in the history written by his own hand, when speaking of the Zaque of Tunja, expresses himself in these terms: "It was a sight to be seen, the taking out of bags of gold on the backs of the Christians, placing their cargoes in the middle of the yard; the same way with the bags full of gold, mixed with the emeralds. Of all was made a mound of gold and emeralds, so large that, placing the infantry behind it, not a man could be seen. Placing those on horseback behind the infantry, they could barely be observed."

Plaza, the historian, in speaking of the doings of Quesada and his men, says: "The king's men found many *arratels* (1.01 lb.) of gold-dust, sixty of which was found in a beautiful urn of the same metal that contained the skeleton of a man, also many emeralds. A large quantity of sea-shells were found, encrusted in gold, which were used as cups for drinking purposes, and trumpets for feast-days. The day after the attack the whole army was occupied in inquiring where more gold could be obtained, for the amiable Indians assured them that the gold, which had been obtained in the palace and town by force, was but a very insignificant part of the public riches."

Other writings attest the riches of that part of the country in gold and emeralds. Aside from the treasure of the Zaque of Tunja, there is the private treasure of the head priest and sun king (Cacique) of Ivaca; that of the master of Duitama, Cacique of Tundama; that of Macaregua of Guanato, Cacique of Guanes; and the great treasures of the Chibchas in the Lake of Guatavita.

It is not known that the Indians ever exploited the quartz gold of their country. The large quantity of gold that existed might have been gathered in the alluvium and the river-beds. The heads of the Carrave River, those of the Pamplona and others, explored only by the Indians, contain much gold. The gold-bearing sands of the well-known "River of Gold" in Jiron; those of the streams near the tops of the peaks of the Organos, and of the river Siachoque, or San Francisco, near Tunja,

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indicate the natural origin of the abundance of gold once possessed by this old Inca king.

A faint idea of the riches of the country may be given by turning to the book of Quesada, wherein he states that one of the leading Indian citizens of Quintama offered him eight cargoes—all that eight men could carry—of gold, on the condition that he should delay his march upon Quintama for two days. If a mere citizen should have such wealth, what should not be attributed to the Zaque of Tunja? And no man knows for how many centuries the Zaques of that old Andean kingdom had been accumulating gold and precious stones.

Should the bulk of the treasure ever be reached, the find will in all probability make some one the richest man in the world. A conservative estimate of the intrinsic value of the treasure, has placed it *above five hundred millions of dollars!*

Verily, a treasure worth the seeking!

GUATAVITA — THE SACRED LAKE OF THE CHIBCHAS

TREASURES of a true El Dorado, solid gold and rare emeralds that belonged to an ancient civilization, rest at the bottom of Lake Guatavita in the northern Colombian Andes. Some of it—an infinitesimal part—has been found; and more of it, perchance the bulk of the sunken gold and jewels, will be found, since plucky men and modern machinery are once more at work on the lake-bed. And the story back of it all is as fascinating as that of the Incas, or the chronicles of Aztec glories.

Much has been told of the treasures of El Dorado, and the search of the Spaniards for them; but the popular impression, likening El Dorado to a will-o'-the-wisp and implying that the Spaniards never found their goal, is incorrect. El Dorado was found and just where the Spaniards sought it—in South America. But they did not find El Dorado what they believed it to be, namely, a veritable land of gold. The real El Dorado was a man, the "Golden One," or, the "Gilded Man," and he was found ruling the Chibcha kingdom, a nation having over a million inhabitants, in as high a state of civilization as the Incas of Peru or the Aztecs of Mexico.

The Chibcha nation occupied a plateau in the northern Andes, more than ten thousand feet above the sea-level. On this plateau were five small lakes, known as Guatavita, Guasco, Siecha, Teuseca and Ubaquo. Of these, Guatavita, which occupied the most northerly part of the plateau, was sacred, and played an important part in all the Chibcha religious rites and ceremonies. Circular in shape, about a mile in circumference, its great depth of water appealed particularly to the Indian in making his offerings or sacrifices to his deities. To this day the old paths and roads leading from the principal towns and worn into the rocks by the tramp of millions and millions of feet are plainly visible.

In prehistoric times this great Andean plateau, the home of the Chibchas, was a vast lake, or rather a string of lakes separated by short mountain spurs. The soil, of great fertility, was quite capable of supporting the enormous population found there by the Spaniards. One city, Usaquen, is said to have had over a million inhabitants. This last statement, however, may be somewhat exaggerated, since the Spanish conquistadores were prone to color their accounts of lands no one else had ever seen.

But without question, Lake Guatavita is one of the most valuable mines in the world, for into its waters for countless years were cast offerings to spirits supposed to dwell in its depths—offerings of gold and cunningly wrought figures of gods in that virgin metal.

In 1636, Juan Rodriguez Fresle wrote a history of the discovery and conquest of New Granada and of El Dorado. This work is thought to be the most accurate and detailed account now extant of the Chibchas and their nation. According to Fresle's account of the discovery of El Dorado, shortly after the founding of Quito, in 1534, by Sebastian de Belalcazar, who was a captain under Pizarro, a strange Indian arrived from the north, and told an unusual story of the ceremonies on Lake Guatavita, when asked the usual question as to the whereabouts of gold in his part of the country.

Don Sebastian, knowing that Pizarro was jealous of him, and desirous of making his

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own way, determined to start immediately in search of El Dorado, or the "Golden Man." He chose a route into Colombia which led through the Cauca Valley, and against the advice of his Indian guide traveled too far north and finally found himself in Cartago, a town at the extreme northern end of Colombia, many miles distant from Lake Guatavita.

Meeting with difficulties at every turn, he doubled back and arrived at Neiva in the Magdalena Valley, only to learn that he had been forestalled, by a few months only, by the famous General Gonzalo Jimenez de Quesada, who had reached Guatavita by way of the Magdalena River and had conquered the entire Chibcha nation.

About the time of Sebastian's arrival at Guatavita, a Captain Nicolas Federman also reached there, having sailed from the Gulf of Maracaibo, off Venezuela, and entered the Chibcha country from the plains of the Orinoco. Together, these three adventurers founded in 1539 the city of Santa Fé of Bogotá, leaving soon after for Spain, where they related their several stories of the conquests in the Colombian district.

Aside from the vast quantities of gold and gems which were cast for countless centuries into the lake, Don Sebastian mentions many minor rulers of Chibcha tribes, who threw their entire fortunes into the waters of Guatavita rather than to have their gold fall into the hands of the invaders.

Many attempts were made by the Spaniards to drain the lake and recover some of the wealth. Quesada, busy himself with another treasure lake, the Pozo de Donato, gave Guatavita to his lieutenant, Lasare Fonte. But Fonte, who lacked the necessary money to carry out his plans for drawing off the water, turned the property over to Quesada's brother, Hernando Perez de Quesada, who succeeded in lowering the water ten feet and took out quite a quantity of gold and jeweled images.

As the lake was really a possession of the Spanish Crown, these men had no authority to remove the treasure, and one Antonio de Sepulveda, a merchant of Santa Fé, realizing this, made the trip to Spain, where he obtained a concession to the lake and its contents. He subsequently spent a fortune on it, and succeeded in getting out considerable quantities of gold and emeralds, which were turned over to the officers of the Spanish Crown. Sepulveda's contract with the Spanish Government called for an absolute draining of the lake, however, and the Government refused to divide with him until this was done. A scarcity of funds put an end to that attempt to drain the lake, and, beyond experience, Sepulveda received little or nothing in return for his efforts.

Numerous minor attempts were later made to drain the lake, but no important results were attained. In 1823, José Ignacio Paris and Captain Charles Stuart Cochrane, R. N., made another unsuccessful effort to recover the treasure. In 1897, a Colombian company was formed to drain the lake, but after several vain attempts the company gladly sold out to "The Contractors, Ltd.," the company until recently in possession of the sacred lake of Guatavita. This corporation, an English one, in spite of numerous drawbacks and one revolution, drained the lake dry in 1904. This was accomplished by means of a tunnel 1,100 feet long, which cost over $30,000.

Sand and mud to a depth of nearly fifty feet was removed from the center of the lake-bed at additional expense, but then, to their dismay, a new difficulty confronted the engineers. When the water was out of the lake the tropical sun baked the mud to the hardness almost of brick. Excavating became very expensive, capital gave out,

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and early in 1913 the company gave up the project.

But many gold ornaments were recovered within the last two years, together with a large collection of emeralds and strings of beads and a lot of quaint old pottery. It is conjectured that these have been carried to the center by the pressure and movement of the mud from the sides. It is thought that if fifty feet or so more of mud can be taken out, the real bottom of the lake will be reached, and that means the bottom as it was about four and a half centuries ago, when the Spaniards conquered the country. When the bottom is reached the searchers expect to find gold-dust and nuggets, together with vast quantities of unbroken pottery, containing golden ornaments and jewels.

Nobody can estimate within millions the value of the treasure which the lake contains, but if the histories written by the Spaniards of olden times can be believed at all, fabulous wealth will be regained from its depths. Guesses have been made from time to time as to the probable value of the treasure, and the most recent, that of M. de la Kier of Paris, puts the contents of the lake at 120 millions of pounds sterling—*about* $600,000,000.

According to Prescott's "History of the Conquest of Peru," and the story of the religious rites enacted upon the sacred lake, told to Captain Belalcazar by the strange Indian who led him north to the country of the Chibchas in 1534, the ceremonies of the Chibcha religion followed closely those of the Chinese Buddhists. Twice a year, at harvest time, and on other special occasions, such as the consecration congregation of a new prince or cacique, the entire Chibcha nation congregated in one of the principal cities, and marched in a solemn procession, with music playing and banners flying, to the shores of the sacred lake, where they threw precious offerings.

An ancient Chibcha tradition tells of the reputedly unfaithful wife of one of the first caciques, whose spirit was supposed to dwell in the depths of the lake. Her lover, who was one of her husband's slaves, was impaled alive, and such indignities heaped upon her that she threw herself into the lake, together with her daughter and a nurse. The three were supposed to occupy a magnificent house of coral at the bottom of the lake, and to be on good terms with the "serpent devil." Many of the offerings cast into the lake were for her, the Chibchas believing that if well treated she might use her influence with the "serpent" for their good.

Following the consignment of the treasure to the water, the Chibchas were wont to give themselves up to a round of joyous festivity, drinking deeply and at great length of *chicha*, the fermented juice of the maize, a sparkling yellow liquor which was handed to Pizarro's followers "in golden vases of extraordinary size" by the women of the harems of the caciques. Often these feasts became orgies, and for days and weeks the people kept up their drinking.

As these ceremonies had been going on for hundreds of years before the coming of the Spaniards, it is quite reasonable to presume that many millions of dollars' worth of gold and jewels have been consigned to the water, only a very small part of which has been recovered.

Among the treasures found is a plate of pure, beaten gold, measuring thirteen inches by ten inches, and weighing eight ounces, eight pennyweights. Other finds are four solid gold birds with lizard heads, one of which is complete and has two gold nose-ring disks; two serpents of beaten gold, with the heads welded on, and standing erect with forked tongues and wearing ear-rings; the figure of a woman in pure gold, supposed to represent the mother of the Chibcha race; a cacique's skull-cap in thin beaten gold, seven inches in diameter, and weighing six ounces; two head-bands of the purest gold; and several cunningly wrought massive drinking-cups. Numerous quaint articles of Chibcha pottery have been found, some of them containing uncut emeralds of a very fine quality, others containing gold nose-rings, pendants, images and articles of adornment.

Apparently all of these valuable articles have come from the sides of the lake, and have supposedly been carried toward the center by the constant movement and pressure of the mud. It will be interesting indeed to see what will come to light when the successors of the English company will have finished their work, and the former treasure of the "Golden Man" and his people finally recovered.

Whether it proves to be a treasure worth *six hundred millions of dollars*, or a treasure worth but a tenth of that amount, the

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Treasure of the Sacred Lake of Guatavita will decidedly be worth the finding.

LOST CITIES AND ISLANDS

THERE is a charm about stories of lost islands and submerged cities which man has not outgrown with advancing civilization. Primitive peoples preserved such legends with delight, and the twentieth-century student goes digging for the secrets of the past with just as much enthusiasm. The fascination of the unknown long-ago holds one as it held the other.

A great many of the riddles have been solved, but some are baffling. When the sand covers a lost city it is merely a matter of time and money to dig, but when the sea has come up and blotted out all that man has built there is little to be done. Unable to walk by the light of science, we are able to enjoy ourselves thoroughly in the pleasant glimmer of legend.

More research and romance have gathered around the Island of Atlantis, between Europe and America, than about any of the lost lands of the world. There is just one chance—the vaguest chance, but still one that has been mentioned by scientists of good standing—that some day there will be found, in those portions of America which were the most highly civilized before the coming of the white man, an inscription, a record of some sort, that may show whether or not those people preserved a tradition that their civilization came from another country.

They had a legend, truly, to the effect that the knowledge of working metals was brought them by a stranger who sailed away after he had set their feet on the path of civilization; but it is an incoherent tale, on which no theory can very well be built. It was thought, at times, that the language of the Americans resembled that of the Basques in southern France, who speak a tongue quite distinct from the dialects about them, but this theory, too, is not very sound. The civilization of Mexico and South America is still unexplained by any connection with Europe.

Men have tried to find in the Azores and the other islands of the Atlantic the peaks of the mountains of the lost continent. Others say that the mountainous islands are the result of upheaval, and represent land that has risen, not land that has sunk. At any rate, it has long been a pleasing speculation to try to trace a connection between the civilization of Atlantis and that of primitive America. So far nothing much has come of it, but so many marvelous discoveries relating to the prehistoric period have been made within the last ten or twenty years, that it hardly is too much to hope that light may yet come to this tangled subject. But although this legend of Atlantis is the best known, it is not the only one which tells of a wonderful island in the west.

NEXT to Atlantis, the best known of the legends of lost lands is that which tells of the destruction of the City of Is, or Keris, on the coast of Brittany, about the middle of the fifth century. The story may have been embellished with time, but that there was a city or at least civilization where the sea flows now is plain enough. There are the remains of a pavement under water and the trunks of the trees swallowed up by the sea are still there to be seen in calm weather.

The sea never gave up the City of Is, and to this day "its bells may be heard," as any Breton will tell you, "before a storm comes."

Off the coast of England, too, at Selsea "Park," there is a bell which has been under the water this many a year, but still rings a warning to mariners. It is the bell of old Bosham Church, swallowed up by the sea when the Danes stole it, centuries ago, and were drowned for their pains. But England, while she has lost land, has gained it also, and there is no reason to deny the possibility of her having the "Park" high and dry once more one of these centuries. Kent has quite recently added 24,000 acres to her territory, where there was once an arm of the sea.

According to Irish tradition, where Lough Neagh now is, there once stood a great and populous city, near which was a holy well, possessed of marvelous efficacy in healing all manner of diseases. An oracle of some kind strictly enjoined that the wicket-gate leading to the well should never be left open at night, on pain of the direst consequences.

One night, however, a woman visited the

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well and, forgetful of the prohibition, omitted to shut the gate on leaving. Straightway the waters rushed forth from the well, and spreading mile after mile in pursuit of the woman, who fled in terror from the mischief she had caused, at length overtook and drowned her. But the furious waters which had spread far and wide over the plain, completely submerged the city, which was never more beheld of mortal eyes.

According to the version of the legend, the vanished city belonged to the fairy race who once peopled the face of the country ere they were driven into the recesses of the hills and to the bottom of the lakes. This feature of the legend is to connect it with the *Tuatha De Danann*, who are identified in popular tradition with the fairy folk. Even to this day the *Daoine Mathe* (good people) have often been seen passing to and from the lake, under the moonbeams, and have given many a token of their friendly disposition to such of the fishermen as have treated them with respect.

A similar story is told of the Lake of Killarney. This, too, was once the site of an ancient city of great wealth and splendor, where the king of the country used to hold his court. Here, too, was a magic well, which, like that of Lough Neagh, was never to be left open at night. One night, however, on the occasion of some high festival, both court and city were so completely given over to revelry that no one remembered to close the well at sunset. In the course of the night the furious waters burst forth, submerging the town and drowning its inhabitants. The Killarney legend, like most widely diffused popular myths, has several variants.

This myth is not confined to the Celtic people. It exists in the East where, possibly, the Arabian Nights story of the Young King of the Black Isles may have had a similar origin. Here, it will be remembered, an enchantress turned a city into a lake, and the inhabitants into four different kinds of fishes: the Mohammedans into white fishes, the Ghebers into red, the Christians into blue, and the Jews into yellow.

The legend is also found in Mexico, related of one of the lakes in the plateau of Analgnac, through whose waters the roofs and walls of the vanished city may yet be described.

In Holland, too, it is said, in the basin of the Zuyder Zee there once stood several cities, which were submerged by the North Sea breaking its banks and overflowing the country. The remains of these cities are sometimes visible beneath the waters.

The medieval account of the enchanted palace of Morgan le Fay, sometimes to be perceived in the sea between Reggia and Messina, wherein, according to some of the romances of chivalry, King Arthur lies "till he be healed of his grievous wound," may have taken rise from similar tradition.

The story of the Fata Morgana's palace is probably of Celtic origin. To return, however, to more purely Celtic traditions, we find that the land of Lyonnesse, the country of the ill-starred Tristan, was believed to have been swallowed up by the waves of the sea—a fate also ascribed to another country off the Breton coast. These stories remind us of the classic myths relating to the island Atlantis.

Welsh tradition tells us how a large portion of what is now Cardigan Bay was once a flourishing territory, known as the Cantref Gwaelod. This district, which is said to have been one of the most fertile and populous in Wales, and to have contained sixteen fortified cities, the most important in the country save Caerleon-upon-Usk, was protected from the sea by a great embankment. The charge of this embankment was entrusted to Prince Seiddynin, who bears the unenviable distinction of having been one of the traditional Three Great Drunkards of Britain.

One night the King of the Cantref, Gwyddn Garanhei, held a great feast in his palace. Seiddynin was invited, and after his usual custom, got very drunk, so that he was unable to close the sluices at the proper time. In consequence of this neglect, the sea broke in that night and submerged the whole country, sweeping away the sixteen cities, and drowning all the inhabitants, except a few who escaped to the neighboring highlands.

King Gwyddn was one of these, but his escape can hardly be called a piece of good fortune, for, from being the wealthiest monarch in Britain, he was reduced to the necessity of keeping a fishing-weir between Dyfi and Aberystwyth, to maintain himself and his son. Three of the embankments of Cantref are said to be still visible. The largest, the Tarn Badrig, or St. Patrick's Causeway, extends for about twenty-one miles southwest of Harlech, and at low

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water about nine miles of it is left bare by the tide.

Many fragments of masonry in brick and granite have been discovered on the Isle Tristan, in the Bay of Douarnenez, and buried in the dunes of the bay. Stone bombs of the fourth century were formerly to be seen in the vicinity, and the remains of two paved roads were visible.

THE POT ON THE CONVICT ISLAND

CAPTAIN R. W. NYE, an old whaling-master, tells the following story of a treasure island: "Northeast by north, ¼ north, magnetic, distant 420 miles from the northeast point of the Island of Albemarle, and southwest by west from Panama as the crow flies, distance 495 miles, lies an island.

"Let some of the navigators that read this article tell those who ask them its exact latitude and longitude and give its name. I have been there many times, but not for the purpose of seeking what they say is buried there. There have been fortunes spent in fitting out expeditions, but so far as my knowledge extends not one has been successful as yet, and I have watched it pretty closely from 1870 to 1913.

"It belongs to the little republic of Costa Rica. Up to the year 1880 from the latter part of the '60's it was a convict settlement. In 1889 the convicts were all transferred to the island of San Lucas in the Gulf of Nicoya, twenty miles above the town of Punta Arenas, where all the Pacific mail steamers call on the run between San Francisco and Panama.

"In the year 1874 I had occasion to call there, as my men were down with the scurvy, and it was the only land I could get to in time to save them. I had been cruising on the off-shore grounds for sperm whales for six months and was picking up quite a good season's work, and through hanging on for another hundred barrels of oil the winds held light and fell well to the eastward so that I could not fetch the Galapagos Islands, and getting down into the doldrums swamphole, as I call it, there where it is nothing but squally weather, I barely fetched this island.

"Twenty days previous to arriving at the island this terrible disease broke out, and the consequence was when I dropped my mud-hook in the bay, I had fourteen cases of the worst scurvy that ever was on shipboard.

"I went on shore and saw the governor of the island, Don Ramon Pechea, and got permission from him to let my crew come on shore. There was at that time lots of fresh vegetables and fruit to be had, so for food we were pretty well off. For the worst cases of scurvy I had holes dug in the ground and put the men in, with their heads over ground, and filling in about them with loose dirt.

"How those poor devils did yell, but 'twas the only remedy to save their lives or their limbs. Four hours a day for one solid week I performed this operation, and at the end of two weeks I had my crew in as fit condition as when I left the home port eleven months before. I recruited ship and got my fresh-water casks filled up. I think it is one of the finest watering places in the world, with the best of water.

"Captain John Lymer was there in 1870 in the Chilean whaler *Virginia Marks*. The convicts made a break and tried to seize the ship, but cutting spades, boarding knives and whale lances are good weapons with which to repel boarders, so the attempt was a failure. Seven of the convicts were killed in the fracas.

"I remember one poor devil that tried to raise a mutiny against the governor. He had been chained to a tree with only a breechcloth for a covering for nearly three years. His body was covered with hair. How he stood the never-ending exposure I do not know. He looked more like an animal than a human being. No shelter from rain and hot sun, no chance to recline day or night, no protection whatever from the elements or pests. Such was the example made of an agitator. It kept the rest quiet.

"In 1881 I went there to water and recruit ship and found the island deserted. I

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let all of my crew go on shore and forage. There was lots of fruit and also plenty of vegetables in the ground. Hogs and chickens were abundant, but very wild, so the boys had some fine sport with the guns. It was a picnic for the lusty whalers, fresh meat galore. They were a mixed crew of all nations, such as you would find in a whaler in those days. None of them had ever heard of the supposed treasure that was buried there, as most of them were ignorant.

"We were homeward bound with a full ship a couple of months later, well up into the southeast trades. My wife and myself were having our after-supper walk on the weather side of the quarter-deck when the conversation of one of the boat-steerers attracted my attention. I stopped at the break of the quarter-deck and listened.

"He was talking in Spanish to the mate about a little episode on the island. It appears that he had shot a wild pig and was packing him down the hillside to the ship and had sat down to take a rest. As he felt cold under him, he scraped away the leaves and there was a large pot, bottom side up, buried in the ground. The bottom was round like a whaler's try-pot. My heart thumped pretty hard just then.

"I said, 'Juan, come here.'

" 'Yes, sir,' said he.

" 'Why didn't you report that to me while we were there?'

" 'Well, sir, I didn't think it was worth mentioning—nothing but a common try-pot, sir.'

" 'All right; that will do, Juan.'

"When we got home I offered this Juan de Sales a third-mate's job on the next cruise, which he eagerly accepted. I was determined to unearth that pot and find out what was under it. But Juan got the smallpox and kicked the bucket, and hope with me was gone. It was one of my near-shots at buried treasure.

"I have been there a number of times since and have always hunted for that pot, but each time the search has been in vain. Yet I think it is there, and full of the good stuff, too. And, furthermore, I think that Juan de Sales knew it—else why should he talk so mysteriously about the thing to one of his mates? But Juan had to get the smallpox and spoil the whole game.

"In 1911 in San Francisco I burst up an expedition that was just about to sail for the island in search of the treasure. I told the leader honestly that I didn't think there was anything to it. And I expect to go down there again, for I want to make one of the first trips through the Panama Canal."

DON BARTLETT'S KETTLE OF GOLD

PERHAPS as aggravating an instance of buried treasure unearthed was the experience of an old riverman named Don Bartlett. According to Bartlett's story, as he told it before he was killed near Red River, he was at the time in the caving bend below New Madrid on the west bank of the Mississippi River. He had been driven in by threat of a storm and his landing was in an eddy against a high sliding bank.

While he was tied there he heard a rumbling sound, and recognized it as one of the little earthquakes that strike across the bottoms there three or four times a year. The earth began to tremble, and the boat to rock.

Bartlett, fearing the bank, started out to cast off, but as he did so he caught sight of a huge iron kettle revealed by the sliding away of the bank. The kettle was about one-fourth out when he spied it.

He sprang to seize it, "divining" its contents; but, as he leaped, the ground gave way, and the kettle was slid out of its place, toppled over, and the cover fell off. Out of it poured a cascade of coins, "all gold."

For an instant the sight gladdened the riverman's eyes; then the bank leaned forward, a strip ten feet lumped over and the bank, kettle, gold, and all, were carried down into forty-five feet of water. Bartlett's boat was swamped, and he was glad to escape with his life.

PIRATE GOLD IN THE SOUTH SEAS

NO LESS a personage than Colonel Etienne Bazin, the famous soldier of fortune is responsible for a strange story of a pirate hoard on one of the Solomon Islands. It was during the skirmish in Ecuador in 1894 when the matter of the treasure was brought to Bazin's attention. He was

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riding hard down a mountain trail when he saw a strange sight.

Sitting on a rock under a bush, with a red flower stuck in his blond, reddish hair, was an old man. His right leg, thrust before him, was bathed in blood from a wound through the calf of his leg. Nevertheless he was playing an old accordion and singing blithely.

Bazin saw at once that he was one of the Kanaka slaves brought by the blackbirders to the west coast of South America. His broken old rifle and his cartridge-belt showed that he was a Peruvian conscript, who had been wounded in the fight. Attracted by the noise he was making, a soldier pounced upon the old fellow and was about to snip his head off with his bloody machete, when Bazin interfered and saved his life.

The man interested the colonel to such an extent that he attached him to his staff then and there, and saw to it that the old Kanaka had the best of care till his wound was healed. Later, after the end of the campaign, Bazin asked the old man what he wished to do.

Joe Ngahuru—for that was his name—drew himself up to his full height, and he was a magnificent physical specimen despite his sixty years, as he made answer:

"I want to do a very great work—something I have been thinking of for many years. Dress me in shoes and the sort of clothes I used to wear. Give me books and my own razor, as I used to have. Then, when you are ready, let me take you to my own country and I will make you very rich. In all these years with white men I have become a white man and am no longer afraid of the spirits and devils that my father feared. You saved my life, you have made me a free man, and if you will tell no other white man I will tell you the things my father told me and will take you to an island beyond my own country where there is a city in which no one has lived since man can remember.

"It was there where the first great canoe came to Kusai from the unknown Avaiki. It is built of stone with great walls, and once in the time of my great-great-great-grandfather, white men in ships, whom you call pirates, hid in that city, and once my ancestor was forced to help in the work of hiding a treasure. My ancestor did not know that the yellow stuff was golden money and golden vessels, but he *did* know it was something that the men valued very highly, and he made very careful markings of the place of burial.

"You must know that the eye of the true man of the people of Turu never makes a mistake. This knowledge I am about to speak came to me truly and accurately.

"You must believe that it is without mistake. The place of burial is on the island of Uvava, which is south of Kusai more than three days' sail. On the north of the island, three islands of a very small size lie in a row, and the line they make runs to a cliff on the mountain-side.

"Over this cliff tumbles a waterfall. One hundred and ten paces to the east of this stream is a cleft in the rock, like a cave. In that cleft the treasure was hidden, and the cleft so heaped with loose stones that it, too, was hidden. So well was this done that my ancestor counted out the paces to the stream, and when they returned once more to the old city he paced the distance by the great wall. It was exactly equal to its greatest length."

Confused as the statement seemed, it was so circumstantial that it bore the stamp of truth and Bazin took it down carefully, got the best chart obtainable and endeavored to plan out the matter. If he had had something of greater interest on hand at the time he would not have heeded old Joe's talk more than to grant his request to return him to his native land. But peace was on in Ecuador and every one with whom he talked concerning the Polynesian and Melanesian islands had some vague, interesting story to tell, so on the first of the year he got together his outfit and took a steamer to San Francisco, Joe accompanying him.

After a long wait they reached Suava on Viti Levu of the Fijis. Up to this point the one island of the three concerned in Joe's story which Bazin had been able to locate positively was Kusai. When they reached the Fijis the old man felt at home at once.

Like many islanders, he had visited nearly all of the archipelagoes. He was very insistent about not taking any other white men into the quest, and showed a strange fear of allowing any islanders to suspect the purpose of their journey.

They could not proceed alone from Suava, however, so Bazin bought a small schooner reputed to have once belonged to the piratical

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desperado, "Comtchee Bill," and, taking a crew of four Friendlies, they set sail for Kusai. There Joe hoped to be able to get further information as to the location of the island with the deserted city and to learn the fate of his wife, from whom he had long been separated.

Imagine his feelings when he found that his wife had been dead for many years. But three of his sons were grown men, of fine character and appearance, and each with several children. Two of them were away on copra work, but the third was overjoyed to find his father again after the long separation. Three nights Joe spent away among his old associates, and the morning after the third, said that he was ready to set sail. But he insisted that Bazin must leave the men of the crew behind—all of them. His son, Bazin, and he himself could work the schooner, Joe said.

They set sail at daybreak the following morning and the second day thereafter made a beautiful volcanic and coral island some forty miles in circumference. There they came to anchor.

Joe went among the islanders seeking knowledge of the lost city. He returned disappointed. There were "houses of evil spirits" on the other side of the island, but they did not want to talk about them. From a native missionary, however, Bazin learned that there were some peculiar stone structures in the vicinity of a little opening in the grand reef of coral, called the Methalaneum Harbor. Thither they sailed.

It was an all-day journey, due to unfavorable wind, so they anchored until morning. At daybreak Bazin was on deck scanning the shore, and was amazed to note that where countless low-lying islets, juts and necks of coral reef rose above the water, the water-front was embanked with great regularity with stone. Taking the schooner inside, and finding a secure anchorage, they lowered the dingey and set out to explore the channels.

Waira, Joe's son, seemed to have eyes equal to a telescope, and after they had been in the channels for a time declared that he discerned buildings of some sort among the thick tropical growth.

By this time Bazin had found that the stone embankments were natural blocks of basaltic prisms from the throat of the volcano, which had been gathered up and laid on the water-front in such a way as to form embankments.

The manner in which the coral polyps had worked on these since the days when an unknown people had executed this great work showed that a thousand, perhaps several thousand years, had elapsed. Steadily moving on to the spot indicated by Waira, they came at last to a group of islets where it was plain that buildings had stood at one time, though the plant growth had thrown them down by separating stone from stone.

The water space between was laid out in canals as perfectly as any engineer could have executed. In the center rose a huge walled building of such size and massive construction that the natural destructive forces of centuries had left it not greatly impaired.

How the soldier's heart leaped with pleasure and gratification at the sight of this wonderfully interesting find! The channels were so choked with growth that they had to cut their way with the machete and it took them the whole day to explore the central structure and its environs.

There is little use speculating on the purposes of this huge building, built out at sea, practically. It is idle to attempt to say who built it or when it was built, save the legend of the coral would say that it certainly far antedates the Christian era. Bazin realized that excavation would reveal much, but they were not equipped for any such extensive work, and their numbers were too small. Returning the next day, he made a general survey of the whole sweep of the built channels, embankments and dilapidated structures. What showed above the sea covered several miles in area.

Improvising a dragging apparatus, Bazin tried for what he might bring up from the bottom near the main building. His sole reward was two pieces of copper about the size of cigars, both so corroded that their original nature could not be guessed. When it is said that scientists agree today that the Polynesian people never have known anything of metals, those two fragments furnish food for thought.

The next thing to do was to find the island of Uvavu, and rounding the reefs they sailed south. By this time Bazin had learned that the average island has four or five names, since each group of islanders bestow one of their own; and each government having a "sphere of influence" in the region contrives

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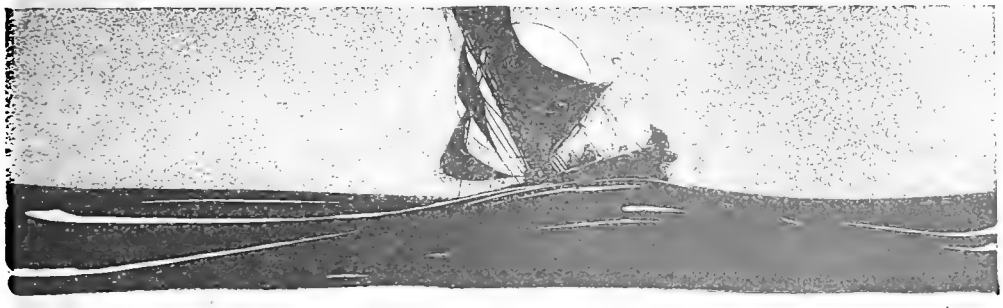

to choose a name different from any of the others.

Bazin was very uncertain as to the location of any Uvavu within striking distance of Ponapi, the correct name of the island whereon they had found the ruins. Joe and his son were not concerned, but whether their mental repose arose from knowledge or faith, Bazin waited to see. They passed Ngarik, swung through the tiny Mortlock Islands and then passed Greenwich Island and some others not charted; but for all of them Waira had names and nearly all appeared to be inhabited. The fourth day they crossed the equator exactly at noon, and to the best of Bazin's reckoning, were closely paralleling the 161st meridian of east longitude. Before dark they sighted an island somewhat higher than the others they had seen, which both declared was Uvavu.

With the glasses Bazin made out two canoes hurrying from a neighboring island to the mainland, and just before sunset a signal column of smoke ascended from the highest point of the island. Old Joe agreed with Bazin that since they were so near the waters infested by the savage Solomon Islanders, they had best lie well out at anchor and mount a guard.

AT DAWN, however, an apparently friendly group of natives appeared on shore and a canoe came out and circled at a polite distance, offering water and fruit. Bazin had Joe do the usual honors and meanwhile studied the shore very carefully. After moving in another mile he was able to make out the cliff just as Joe's ancestor had described it. And there were streams of water falling over it! Bazin began to calculate the amount of the treasure. It seemed too good to be true.

If he had been as experienced as he is today in the ways of the interesting islanders between New Guinea and the Gilberts, he would not have done the things he did that day. He relied on the two Kusai men, however, and when they agreed that it was best for one man to stay on the schooner and the two others to go ashore, he raised no objections.

Joe and Bazin went, each carrying a rifle and a pair of revolvers. The natives on shore were somewhat blacker and more negroid than those Bazin had been seeing, and it seemed to him that though there were huts on the island, the people he saw had the appearance of being merely visitors. For instance, the path by which they ascended to the cliff was as unknown to the two natives Joe secured to pilot them as it was to Bazin. He thought this very strange.

It was heavy work among the bushes and the loose rock making the necessary measurement from the stream, but they got it done finally, and to their deep pleasure found that it marked a long, sliding pile of stones, very thickly overgrown, but with running plants coming out of the heart of the cliff in a way that showed there was a crevice there. Joe's ancestor had had a good memory and his posterity had transmitted the tradition perfectly. The place of the hidden gold was found!

Much as Bazin would have liked to set to work at once, it was plain that he must get tools ashore from the ship and must persuade some of the islanders to labor for them. On the way back down the hill they passed a thicket, from which came a faint, peculiar odor, and noticed a native whirligig planted to keep birds away.

Pushing aside the bushes, Bazin was horrified to see a little ceremony house in the center of a glade, and fully forty heads of men, women and children, in the process of curing. They were the spoils of some recent cannibal raid and spelled as plainly as

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anything could that they were in the gravest danger.

Something impelled him to take one of them, so he picked it off its support and placed it in a sack he had brought with him. The two youths now showed great anxiety to hurry on before him, but under Joe's hard eye and stern words, they stayed while the pair made their way rapidly down.

They were nearing the huts and were within sight of the dingey drawn up on the beach when at some signal between them the two youths darted right and left into the bush, and one of them gave a long, far-carrying cry. Evidently the islanders had been conferring as to the best strategy for getting all three of the strangers on shore at once, killing them and looting their vessel. Bazin's discovery of the heads had evidently precipitated matters.

At the cry the savages came swarming from the vicinity of the huts, bearing arms. The boat had not been molested, but two of the men ran toward it to make sure that the strangers should not reach it. Raising his rifle, Bazin dropped both of the warriors. A shower of arrows fell about him in the bush.

"Run for the boat, Joe!" he cried.

And without further ado they ran for their lives. It was an uneven race, as the natives had the shorter distance and were all the time in the open, but as soon as Bazin struck the open he began firing with his revolver as he ran, and very quickly checked the charge for the boat.

Let Colonel Bazin himself finish the story of buried treasure on the island of the head-hunters.

"It is a pleasure to me to see a well-trained savage throw a tao, especially one of the plain polished shafts of hardwood tipped with a keen bit of bone or shell. The deadly weapon comes for you like a shaft of sunlight and when it finds its mark the story of a warrior is told. It is a marvel that neither of us was touched before we reached the beach.

"Laying hands to the dingey we were just ready to shove off when a vicious short spear caught Joe's left thigh, pierced it, and pinned him to the bow of the dingey. Tossing the things I carried into the craft, I took hold of him to wrench him free and so heavily did I heave that I lost my footing and fell, Joe going over me sprawling.

"The thirty seconds the head-hunters were free from our fire was the very time they wanted. Before I could get to my feet and pull the old man into the boat they were on us. Joe was maddened by his suffering. He tore the spear from his thigh and met the rush with a terrible counter attack. I emptied both revolvers with good effect and then clubbed my rifle, and he and I stood side by side with our backs to the dingey fighting the fight of our lives.

"There were not less than sixteen men with spears and clubs opposed to us, but they could not surround us and were too near one another to fight well. I had not imagined that Joe had retained much of his native skill in handling weapons, but, hard pressed as I was, I could not help admiring his spear play. I never knew so many things in the way of fencing could be done with a spear. Since that time I have seen Maoris and Papauns give some wonderful exhibitions.

"JOE was weakening from loss of blood, and I cried to him to get into the boat, that I would try to cover our retreat. He made the effort, backing away into the edge of the water, but one of the islanders, running a few paces down the beach, dropped on his knees and sent an arrow whipping through the clothing at the small of my back, and his second shot caught poor old Joe Ngharu fairly in the temple and he fell dead against me.

"I snatched his second pistol from his belt before I let the body slip down to the sand. The belches of its muzzle drove the mass of islanders back a little.

"Tossing his body into the dingey, I shoved away. They paused to draw bows and that gave me a chance to jam some cartridges into my rifle. Lying in the bow of the boat, I began picking them off, while arrows hurtled over my back or stuck in the planks of the dingey.

"I had no chance to attempt to paddle or row, but the wind was strong off shore and in ten minutes I was approaching the first reef. Now I was compelled to expose myself partly and take to the oars, but was fortunate, for their marksmanship was bad. A very few minutes more and I was out of range. So incensed was I over the death of the faithful old man, that though I was not out of danger I took up my rifle once more and dropped into the bow, bowling

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over two more of the savages before they broke and ran for cover.

"I am ashamed to say it, but among the eight or nine men stretched out on the beach was one shot through the middle. He got to his feet, and started for the huts, when I put him down for good. I repeat that I often think of that act with shame and I relate it only as a commentary on what a man will do with the blood fever on him.

"A large canoe was now approaching from the west, and I pulled hurriedly for the schooner. Wairá had seen the entire fight from the deck and was wild with rage over his father's death. With five more men in his frame of mind I believe we could have gone ashore and wiped out the cannibals, even with the newcomers. After studying them through the glasses it was plain to me that we had run afoul of a party of raiders who had come to the island from the islands to the south. They had killed all of the few inhabitants and were leisurely preparing the heads, using the island as a base for raids to the west."

Bent on making an issue of the matter and preparing himself properly to recover the treasure in the crevice, Bazin set sail for the Gilbert Islands, where Waira was sure they would find a British war-vessel. But in this they were disappointed, and only succeeded in driving a jagged hole in the schooner on a coral reef. Bazin shipped into Sydney with a trader, taking Waira with him, and when he established cable communication with his friends he found there were urgent private reasons for returning to Peru at once. Though he went back the next year to the Carolinas, he has never yet carried out his plans to recover the treasure of the so-called Uvavu.

Nor, as far as known, has any subsequent attempt been made to locate this pirate hoard in the South Seas.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF SHAHAMAT JUNG

HIDDEN somewhere within the abandoned mosque of Mhoti Jheel, (Lake of Pearls) lies today the treasure of Shahamat Jung, Begum of Murshedabad, the ancient capital of Bengal. This treasure, valued at some fifty millions of dollars in pearls and rubies, gold and silver ornaments, precious woods and ivories, had been known for many years as the "haunted hoard of the Begum" because of the train of mysterious deaths attendant upon searches for it.

In the ruins of the old city long abandoned, where trees and jungle fight the stones for ownership, where the sacred monkeys swing by their tails, stands the mosque which Shahamat Jung built. It has withstood the encroachment of time, has weathered the centuries, and stands almost as complete now as in the days when the prayers to Allah went up from it.

Attached to the mosque, according to authentic documents of the time, is a strong room. Sixty feet in length, a little over twenty feet in breadth, and about twelve feet in depth, of solid masonry construction, the vault has defied both man and time. The extreme hardness of the flint-like stones, the great thickness of the double and treble walls, have thus far preserved inviolate the contents of the inner chamber.

History of the great treasure and of the Begums of Murshedabad reads like a romance. A century and a half ago the city extended for miles along the banks of the Ganges; its streets and bazaars teemed with human life. It was known as "Murshedabad the Magnificent," as "The Queen City of Bengal," as "The Paradise of Nations." Today but a small community of villagers and a few descendants of princely houses dwell amid the ghostly memories of the old capital. In row after row of shops, but two or three will be found tenanted; in street after street lined with once pretentious dwellings, but one or two will be found habitable; among scores of mosques, but half a dozen are in use.

"Almost empty, idle, ruinous and saddening beyond portrayal, are the streets of the last independent capital of Bengal. The jungle is creeping slowly into the heart of old Murshedabad, blotting even the ruins.

"By day, great gray monkeys swing from trees which lattice the crumbling marble façades of queens' apartments; at night, jackals prowl where princes once feasted, where kingdoms were bargained for, where the loveliest women of the age were crowned or beggared as their favor waxed or waned, where murders as wanton and relentless as history ever mirrored were committed, where the beautiful dancing girl, Fazai, who cost a *lac* [100,000] of rupees, and weighed

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but forty-four pounds, was entombed alive to salve the injured vanity of Seraj-ud-Dowlah."

The Lake of Pearls is half dry and unlovely with stagnation and weeds, while ryots grow paddy in the marshy land at its edge. And upon this marshy land was built the mosque of Mhoti Jheel, not far from the stately palace of a former Begum. The palace has long since crumbled away, but the mosque remains, a white building, beautiful and austere, with slender minarets at each corner, and fine carvings in stone and marble.

Shahamat Jung was possessed of immense wealth. To prevent it from falling into the hands of the English, he converted it all into jewels and gold and precious ivories. Living slaves were then walled up in the strong room—so runs a musty document—"that their spirits might guard the wealth therein."

Of course, efforts have been made to get treasure. Sir Henry Walton, a Warwickshire Englishman, with ten of his countrymen, began a search for it early in the eighteen hundreds. He perished in the attempt, together with his entire party, for one day all of them were found dead within the mosque. Their bodies had been frightfully mutilated. It had been said that the party quarreled among themselves. It has been stated that a large body of indignant natives fell upon the searchers. In all probability the truth will never be known.

From time to time other isolated attempts have been made to gain the hoard. Not one who so attempted lived to accomplish the task. Some were found murdered, some went insane, others died of an unknown disease.

In 1899 the last attempt was made by one of the lineal descendants of the Begum. Laborers provided with giant-powder and up-to-date tools were bidden to break down the outer walls of the treasure chamber. Scarcely had they commenced their task before some of them fell ill and dropped to the floor. Convulsions and death ensued. The others fled, and no inducements could prevail upon them to return to the seemingly bewitched room.

A chain of well-attested fatalities—whether they are coincidences or not can not be stated—has kept this treasure inviolate up to the present time. Let twentieth-century wisdom deride as it may, the beliefs of Murshedabad, there remains something strange and repellent in that great gray box of masonry, and the slight gap once made in its side by a party of doomed workmen who sought to reach the hidden wealth.

The ordinary people of Murshedabad regard the mosque with superstitious dread. Their belief in the wonderful treasure within its walls is profound, yet not one would lay sacrilegious hands upon the iron-like pile, lest the curse again descend and smite. English curiosity would certainly long ago have wrested the treasure from the strong room, but Indian belief respects the traditions of the past and has left the Mhoti Jheel treasure within its flint-like tomb.

Whether searchers who have heretofore striven for the gold and jewels have been murdered, whether poisonous gases or growths have been the cause of their undoing, will probably never be known; but, it is reasonable to assume that in these wonderful days some man or men may find a means of penetrating to the heart of the treasure-vault.

If the fifty-million-dollar coup ever comes to pass, one-half will have to be made over to the five living great-granddaughters of Shahamat Jung. A part will have to go to the Indian Colonial Government for its approval. The balance will go to the finder of the treasure. But a generous slice of a $50,000,000 treasure-trove should be enough to satisfy the most rapacious hunter for hidden wealth.

LATROBE'S $6,000,000 HOARD OFF HONDURAS

SIX million dollars' worth of Spanish doubloons, jewels and altar ornaments of solid gold, are said to be buried upon a small island just off the coast of Honduras, waiting for the lucky man who can find them. It is pirate gold—the hoard of Latrobe, contemporary of Jean Lafitte; and the history of the treasure is a story of the sea, of battle and murder, of revenge, greed and justice.

In the early eighteen hundreds, when Lafitte and Latrobe were levying tribute all along the American coast from the Carolinas to Florida and around through the

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waters of the Gulf of Mexico, Latrobe was wont to boast that he had the "most desperate crew of pirates as ever scuttled a ship." And his record seems to bear out his boast. It was far from being an idle brag.

It was in 1808 that Latrobe made his great capture. Two vessels laden with bullion and bound for Spain were captured off the Florida coast, their crews murdered, the treasure-chests looted, and the ships fired. Rejoicing in the prospect of a sharing of big booty, Latrobe and his men set sail for their rendezvous, well contented with their victory over the Spanish merchantmen.

But another vessel was sighted. Through powerful glasses the trained eyes of their lookout made out the spars and hull of a prize indeed—another treasure-ship, a large one. Inflamed with rum, the pirates crackled on full sail and hastened in pursuit. The vessel was armed and well-manned, however, and a stubbornly fought battle ensued after she had been overtaken.

But it was little use trying to stand off Latrobe's experienced fighters. They swarmed over the treasure ship, and finally carried all before them, after losing themselves quite a few men. When the last handful of sailors surrendered, they were butchered without mercy, and their bodies thrown overboard. Latrobe and his men were firm believers of the old adage that "dead men tell no tales."

A great shout was set up when the pirates finally got below. They had indeed captured a prize! Here was gold beyond their fondest dreams—gold in the form of coined doubloons, and jeweled altar services worth millions!

As they were lugging out their treasure, two boys, half-dead with fright and wounds, were discovered partly hidden under a pile of old canvas. They had witnessed the murdering of the crew, and terror had rendered them speechless.

"You're young," said Latrobe to them. "We'll spare your lives if you join us. We'll make powder-monkeys out of you.'

Not knowing what else to do, and fearing that Latrobe would order their throats slit, the boys nodded an assent, and the unwounded youth was set to work at once transferring the treasure. After everything of value had been securely stowed in the hold of the pirate vessel under Latrobe's watchful eye, he gave orders to fire the treasure-ship.

In a twinkling the pirates placed tow and pitch aboard her, and set fire to it. The proud ship became a mass of flames, with tottering masts and snapping cordage; and an hour later what had once been a thing of stately beauty, filled with life, became a blackened floating hulk.

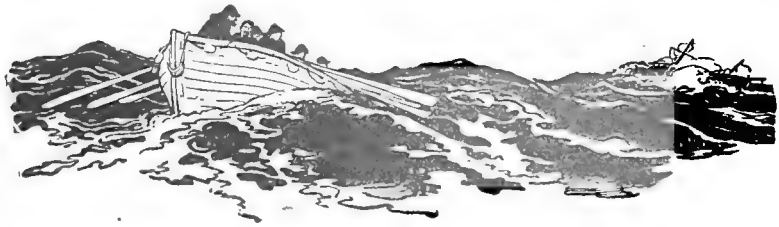
Upon the day following, the wounded lad died, and his body received sea burial. The pirate ship then stood off to the westward, with "gold enough on board to make every member of the crew rich for the rest of their days."

But they were not destined to get away with it as easily as they supposed. A sail was sighted. In due time the towering canvas of a large vessel was distinguished dead ahead—no merchantman this time, but a gallant Spanish man-o'-war, ready and eager to fight the boldest pirate that ever cut a throat.

"Head due south!" shouted Latrobe to the helmsman after he had determined the nature of the craft ahead.

The Spanish vessel gave chase. Then, ahead of Latrobe, appeared another sail—that of an American corvette on the lookout for pirates. But Latrobe's ship was a speedy one. He managed to dodge and hold his own until darkness came on; then, dousing his lights, he headed south, and sailed all night.

When daylight came not a sail was in sight, and the pirate breathed easier again. But he knew that the Spanish and American could not be far away, and made up his mind to hide his treasure before they could get him. So he headed for the near-



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est land—a small, uninhabited island just off the coast of Honduras.

Through a narrow passage leading in between a coral reef which guarded a tight little harbor, Latrobe made his way, and anchored. Boats were lowered, and in the first one the pirate chief went ashore to select a place where he might bury the treasure—the blood-stained gold which had cost so many lives.

"He found three mahogany trees growing in a triangle," runs the story, "just the spot to mark the hiding-place of his treasure. Exactly ninety yards due north of the most northerly of the three trees, near the head of a boiling spring he made his cache."

Latrobe's men got their shovels and dug till nightfall. They had made a large hole, at least fourteen feet deep. In the bottom of it they spread a layer of conch-shells gathered from the shore. On top of these they piled the heavy chests of bullion and ornaments.

Earth was then filled in for a few feet, and then another layer of conches, till the hole was but six feet deep. In this grave they laid the bodies of the two pirates who had succumbed to the wounds received during the battle with the last merchantman. Then the hole was filled up.

"Even if any one finds this place," Latrobe is reported as having said, "they'll think it's only a grave, —— them!"

Upon the following afternoon Latrobe made preparations to leave the harbor, but to his intense disgust, just as his men were heaving away to raise their anchor, a sail appeared in the offing. It proved to be the American corvette.

True, the corvette drew too much water to run over the bar between the reefs, but she could remain outside till Latrobe made up his mind to run the gantlet of her Long Toms. Then the Spanish man-o'-war came up, and the two vessels lay on and off the narrow entrance, ready to riddle the pirate as soon as she should cross the bar. Latrobe saw that there was nothing for him to do but to try to run out at dusk. And he did.

It was a losing fight. The pirates fought with an energy born of despair, but they were no match for the better-armed seamen of the war vessels. Those that were not killed outright were taken prisoners and taken to Kingston, Jamaica. There was a formal trial, at which all were convicted of piracy and sentenced to death, all save the boy who had been scared into joining the cutthroats. He proved that he had been forced into their service in order to save his life; whereupon he was set at liberty.

The night before Latrobe was hanged he pleaded for a brief interview with the boy. It was granted.

"Take these papers to Jean Lafitte," he whispered to the youth, as he slipped a small packet into his hands. "It's a chart of the island where the gold is buried. Lafitte will make you a rich man."

THE next morning at sunrise Latrobe and his crew suffered the penalty of their many crimes. And the boy went on his way free. But he had seen enough of the pirates, and shuddered at the thought of his late companions. He preserved the packet, but, so far as can be learned, never made any effort to join Lafitte. In all probability he had seen enough of pirates and piracy. Years passed by.

Long after Latrobe was forgotten and his bones were rotting somewhere in a Jamaican swamp, years and years after Jean Lafitte had gone the way of all pirates—either in battle on the deck of his vessel, or in the wilds of Yucatan, history is not specific—a sailing-ship was on its way from the Sandwich Islands to San Francisco. In the forecastle an old sailor lay dying—the boy who once sailed with Latrobe.

A young Doctor Davidson aboard did all he could to ease the dying moments of the gray-bearded seaman, and the old man was grateful.

"Open my sea-chest," he whispered the night before he died. "In it, in the left-hand corner at the bottom, you'll find a packet of papers. I was aboard a pirate ship once, Latrobe's, and those papers will tell you where his gold is buried."

The surgeon took but little stock in what he believed to be the vague mind wanderings of the dying old man, but he found the packet, opened it, and saw among other papers the plan of the island, with directions of some sort written beneath in French. Ignorant of French himself, the doctor preserved the papers until San Francisco was reached. His curiosity had been aroused. There he had the writing translated, and pieced together the story of nearly fifty years before.

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Briefly, Latrobe had left behind him the exact situation of the island, the spot where the treasure was buried north of the mahogany tree, and all the details necessary to find it. One of the papers gave the names of the vessels which Latrobe had captured, looted and sank, an estimate of the amount and nature of the booty, and a brief account of some of the fights.

For years Doctor Davidson hesitated about making a try for the buried gold. Finally, in 1888, some thirty years later, he enlisted the aid of John Benjamin Peck, a special agent of the Treasury Department. Peck helped him form a syndicate, and a short while later the yacht *Maria* was chartered at the rate of six hundred dollars a month.

Guided by the papers they experienced but little difficulty in locating the uninhabited island off the Honduras coast; and upon entering the harbor they set up a shout of joy—for there stood the three mahogany trees, just as they were described in the time worn manuscript written by the pirate the night before he was hanged.

Too excited to wait for a meal, or to verify their measurements very carefully, the men began to dig. The soil was soft; their downward progress rapid. Soon they reached a depth of six feet. Here they found human bones—two skulls, some ribs, a thigh bone and several smaller ones.

"It's the pirates' grave!" cried Doctor Davidson. "The gold is below. We've got it!"

Faster and faster they dug down, confident that they were on the spot where gold was buried, millions of dollars' worth of it!

Nine feet, ten feet, eleven feet, and then —disappointment. For the hole filled up with boiling hot water. It bubbled up from the bottom. It overwhelmed them.

With the equipment they had, it was impossible to dig further. During the eight years which had intervened between the burial of the gold and their attempt to dig it up, the boiling spring had shifted its position—had seemingly bored its way toward the concealed hoard.

The diggers scrambled out of the hole. They discussed the situation. Finally they brought ashore a small caisson they happened to have with them, and after experiencing considerable difficulty, got it in position.

It was a tough job, drawing off the quicksand, and digging trenches to carry off the scalding water, but before the hot spring forced the workers to abandon the search, they found a few bits of oak and plenty of conch shells, but no gold. Sadly, the party gathered up its tools and belongings, boarded the *Maria*, and sailed for New York.

Eight years elapsed. One Cornelius Healy, who had been with the Davidson party, then tried to get up another expedition. This was during 1896. He failed in his efforts to interest capital, and the packet of papers passed into the possession of one William H. Small, a native of Lancashire, England. Small, who had spent most of his life in the United States, formed the acquaintance of several other members of the first recorded expedition, and laid his plans.

Several years later he acquired possession of the yawl *Catherine*, a double-ended forty-five footer, in rather bad condition, having been laid up for several years. In this yawl, purchased in England, Small and his crew of one man crossed the Atlantic to New York, and by last accounts were well on the way to the islet off Honduras.

This was years ago, in 1907, to be more definite—but had Small succeeded in locating the golden hoard of Latrobe, the world would certainly have learned of it in the meanwhile. The yawl was small and old; the treasure-seekers were but two in number; their equipment, their means and resources slight. Their efforts were, as far as can be learned, fruitless. Is it a surprising matter?

We have no record of a later attempt to raise the gold of Latrobe. That the treasure is still on the uninhabited island off the coast of Honduras, is, in the opinion of the writer, more than possible, it is quite probable. If so, however, in all likelihood it is still guarded by the boiling waters of the hot spring which forced the other seekers to give up the search. An expedition, to be successful, will have to be equipped with hydraulic pumps and up-to-date excavating machinery.

With such an outfit, backed by an ample capital, and with strong arms and stout hearts to carry out the orders and plans of some clear-headed executive, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the crime-stained gold of Latrobe will one day be unearthed.

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THE TOBERMORY TREASURE GALLEON

BETWEEN the western highlands of Scotland and the Hebrides lies the Island of Mull. Its headlands crowned with the ruins of a gray castle, once the stronghold of the clans of the Macleans and Macdonalds. Here, long ago, the kilted fighting men raided and burned and slew in savage feuds.

Near the point where the island is washed by the Atlantic, is situated the town of Tobermory. The bay that it faces is a beautiful sheet of water, and is of fair depth.

More than two centuries ago, after the English navy met the Spaniards in a running sea-fight in the English channel, and the Spanish Armada drew out of the battle-line and came to anchor off the coast of Flanders, a truce was declared. But the truce was a short one. Drake's fire ships appeared, threatening the destruction of the Spanish galleons.

The Armada, still numbering one hundred and twenty battle-ships, troop-ships, and convoys, slipped their cables and fled up the North Sea. There, more than half of them went to the bottom in a great storm, or were driven ashore. Only fifty-three shattered hulks survived to limp back to Spain.

Some of the Spanish ships went to pieces on the coast of Scotland, others to the west of Ireland, and some as far north as the Shetland Islands. One of them, the *Florensia*, a galleon of African oak, nine hundred and forty-one tons burden, armed with fifty-two guns, and with nearly five hundred sailors and marines on board, survived the storm and sailed into the Bay of Tobermory for supplies.

Food was running short. The storms of the North Sea meant lost spars and tackle, which must be renewed for the voyage to Spain. The Spaniards intended to help themselves from the Highlanders' stores on the neighboring lochs and hills. But they found their match in the person of Sir Lauchlan Maclean, ensconced in his castle, Duart.

Before they knew it, the Spaniards found that Sir Lauchlan had dragged some of his guns to the slope overhanging Tobermory and had the galleon covered.

"Pay for what you take, or I fire on you!" was his ultimatum.

The Spaniards came to terms.

Sir Lauchlan wanted some of the Spaniards' pieces of eight in exchange for his sheep, beeves, spars from his woodlands, and fresh water for the ship's casks. But he wanted more. The clans Ranald, Tan and Macdonald were his enemies. He saw among the Spanish soldiers arms to crush them. Let part of the payment be in money, said he, the rest in a loan of Spaniards to fight the Ranalds, Tans and Macdonalds.

This seemed fair to the Spaniards. As they laid in their supplies and repaired their spars and riggings, Sir Lauchlan led a detachment of Spanish marines against the rival clans. They laid waste the Islands of Rum, Canna, Eig, and Muck and the shores of the mainland at Ardnamurchan, then besieged Mingarry Castle, on the Sound of Mull.

The siege was still on when word came to the Spaniards to rejoin their ship, as she was ready for sea. Sir Lauchlan demurred. The Spanish pieces of eight had not been paid. The Spaniards could not be prevented from returning to their ship. But Sir Lauchlan held three of their officers as hostages—pledges of their good faith until the money was paid.

The Spanish commander was smooth-tongued and full of promises, but did not pay. Sir Lauchlan put these promises to a test. He sent one of his men, Donald Glas, aboard the galleon for the money. The canny Scotch leader had guessed right: Donald Glas had no sooner reached the ship than he was seized and imprisoned below decks.

That night the Spaniards, abandoning their three hostages held by Sir Lauchlan, made ready to put to sea. As the day broke, Donald Glas, in sentiment or cruelty, or both, was brought on deck and told to look upon his home for the last time. The Scotchman was overcome with emotion at the sight of the loch, the sea, the Highlands. He begged to be taken back to his cell, that he might see no more.

The Spaniards weighed anchor. The Highlanders on shore saw the wind just beginning to fill their sails, when the end came —an awful annihilation. Donald Glas had found that his cell was near a powder magazine. In the night he had laid a train of powder from the one to the other. Now he fired the magazine.

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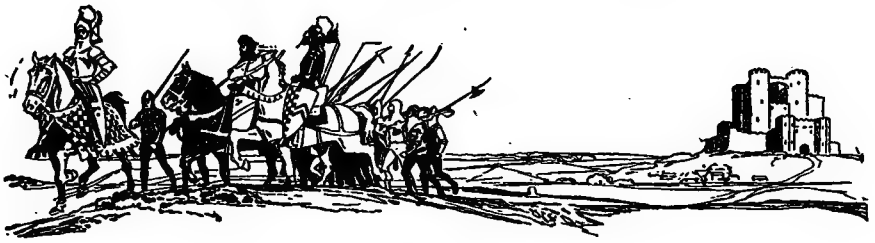

When the column of flame and débris and the clouds of smoke had cleared away, Sir Lauchlan saw a blazing, dismembered hulk drift a little while toward the sea, then sink, a complete loss.

That much treasure of gold and jewels and plate went down in this lost galleon, was the opinion of Scotch and Irish tradition. She was said to have contained the paymaster's chest of the Armada, and to have carried to the bottom thirty million ducats of money, and church plate of fabulous riches. This much is certain: the *Florenzia* was one of the largest galleons of the Armada, and she never returned to Spain.

The papers of the great house of Argyll record the beginning of the search for this sunken treasure as far back as the year 1640. In 1665, the ninth Earl of Argyll, the son of the man who had obtained ownership of the galleon from the British Crown, employed divers to search for the treasure. These divers easily found the hull of the galleon, and made a chart showing its exact bearings by landmark on two sides of the bay. This ancient chart of the Spanish wreck is owned by the present Duke of Argyll, and has been used by modern treasure-seekers who were unable, even with this aid, to find the remains of the *Florenzia*, so deeply have her timbers sunk in the tide-swept sands of the bay.

Many attempts have been made in intervening years to locate the galleon and salve her treasure, but very little of it has been brought to the surface. In 1740, with the aid of a diving-bell, a magnificent bronze cannon was discovered. On and off quite a number of gold and silver coins have been found by various divers, and the treasure-seeking was thereby freshly encouraged.

In 1903 a number of Glasgow gentlemen formed a company and subscribed several thousand pounds to equip and maintain a treasure-seeking expedition by modern methods. The Duke of Argyll, like his ancestors before him, was ready to grant permission to search for the wreck of the galleon for a term of years, conditioned upon a fair division of the spoils. He let them have the old chart, and all the family papers dealing with the *Florenzia*.

Although the ancient chart was explicit in its bearings, and these were taken when men were living who had seen a part of the wreck, above tide, locating the galleon proved to be a baffling puzzle. During the first year, divers and lighters were employed in this work, but the salvage consisted of nothing more valuable than another bronze cannon, loaded with a stone ball, several swords, scabbards, and blunderbusses, a gold ring, and some fifty doubloons bearing the names of Ferdinand and Isabella, and Don Carlos.

Two years later the work was renewed with a costly equipment. A mound of sand was revealed, which it was concluded covered the surviving part of the galleon. Digging into this bank, the divers found many curious trophies, such as arms, boarding-pikes, powder-pans, and other small articles, much corroded and crusted. Powerful suction-pumps were set at work clearing away this bank, and after three weeks' work, a massive silver candlestick was raised, yet the whereabouts of the galleon itself had by no means been ascertained.

In 1906, an area of eight acres had been thoroughly explored. In 1907 a powerful salvage steamer, the *Breamer*, was chartered, and during the season several pieces of silver plate were recovered. In 1908, owing to a shortage of funds, the search was temporarily abandoned. Then followed the expiration of the five-year concession from the Duke of Argyll.

At the present writing, a concession is held by a London syndicate, managed by Lieutenant-Colonel K. M. Foss, a hustling American. That the galleon *Florenzia*, richly laden, is at the bottom of Tobermory Bay, is a certainty; that Lieutenant-Colonel Foss will succeed in raising the Spanish gold

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and silver is a question. Not long ago, a bark, anchored in the bay, was preparing to sail. When her anchor was raised, a Spanish doubloon was found sticking to one of its flukes.

Thus, in the quiet old town of Tobermory, where the ancient foemen, Macleans and Macdonalds, live peacefully side by side, the busy parties of treasure-seekers come year after year with their impressive flotilla of floating and diving apparatus, only to leave town empty-handed and saddened. Whether Lieutenant-Colonel Foss will have a different story to tell remains to be seen. At any rate he has the sole right to the *Florenzia* until June the fifteenth, 1915—a right disputed by the sands and sea alone.

THE BULLION ABOARD THE *SADIE F. GALLER*

THE cannery schooner *Sadie F. Galler*, lost at sea eighteen years ago, was called back from the port of missing ships in May, 1913, when Walter McCary of Tacoma "stumbled" upon the vessel in sixty feet of water near Chignik Lagoon, Alaska. Preparations were soon made to take out of the wreck nearly $50,000 in bullion with which she was laden.

McCary, a submarine diver, was placing a fish-trap when he found the old wreck. Scraping away the weeds and barnacles, he uncovered the schooner's name-board. A subsequent investigation of the sailing records showed that the vessel had foundered some eighteen years ago at a point off the Alaska coast not far from her present resting-place. According to McCary's agreement with the owners and consignees he will receive for his share fifty per cent. of the salvage.

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR WOULD-BE TREASURE-SEEKERS

THESE are remarkable times indeed, for men are flying through the air, over the surface of the earth, and are creeping along the bed of the sea. But, although the air holds no treasure for the intrepid aviator, and little gold is to be found loose upon the face of the earth, the hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of gold, silver, copper and precious stones lying on the bottom of the sea, are ready to the hand of the first person who will devise means for recovering them. And inventors in every part of the world are building submarine boats, diving armor, dredging apparatus, and other devices, solely for the purpose of finding and bringing to the surface these sunken treasures.

The two main problems to be solved are those of protection against water pressure, and of providing light in which to work. The latter problem is more easily solved than the former. Modern developments in electric lighting make it practically certain that powerful searchlights can be devised which will give sufficient illumination for salvage operations at depths as great as four hundred feet. Divers who have been down one hundred and fifty feet agree that even when the sun is shining brightly, the ocean depths are in semi-darkness, which increases as one descends.

The other and more serious problem is that of pressure. The ordinary diver's equipment depends upon a constant supply of air pumped in from above, and a rubber suit with a metal helmet, all air-tight, or nearly so, to keep the water from rushing in the minute the pressure of air pumped through the hose becomes less than the water pressure from outside.

Theoretically, of course, the air pressure could be maintained at a point that would equalize the water pressure, but what would become of the diver? Men working in compressed-air caissons, under a pressure of forty-five pounds to the square inch, are risking their lives—and forty-five pounds means a depth of only one hundred and four feet of water. At two hundred feet the water pressure is a little over eighty-six and one-half pounds to the square inch; at two hundred and fifty feet it is over one hundred and eight pounds; at three hundred feet it is one hundred and thirty pounds—and many of the sunken treasure-ships lie at even greater depths.

Very few divers have descended as deep as one hundred feet. One adventurous young man went down one hundred and ninety-six feet in Puget Sound, but on a second attempt his helmet was crushed by the eighty-five pounds of water pressure and he was hauled up dead. Two English naval

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officers are said to have descended two hundred and ten feet, but could remain at that depth only a few seconds.

The problem of getting down to the deep-lying treasure-ships, therefore, is essentially one of constructing a mechanism sufficiently rigid to withstand the terrific water pressure. It must carry its own supply of oxygen, since any sort of flexible air-tube would be crushed flat long before a depth of four hundred feet were reached, and it must be so constructed that the diver inside it can accomplish something after he reaches the wreck, even if he can do nothing more than attach a grappling hook to a copper ingot.

The portable oxygen supply, originally worked out for mine-rescue apparatus, has been recently adapted to diving armor by the German inventor of the pulmotor. The construction of a hollow apparatus with walls braced against tremendous pressure from without, is even less difficult from an engineering point of view. Modern glass-makers can furnish "bull's-eyes" sufficiently strong to resist a pressure of several tons to the square inch, enabling the diver to see what he is doing.

Most interesting is the suit of armor, constructed of one of the new aluminum alloys, braced internally and provided with articulating joints at the shoulder, elbow, hip, knee and ankle, these joints being water-tight at very high pressure. Instead of gloves, the ends of the arms are provided with hooks running through stuffing-boxes so that they can be manipulated by the hands of the diver inside the metal sleeves.

This apparatus carries its own supply of oxygen and is intended to be used in connection with a new type of inclosed electric lights, which may either be lowered independently or attached to the armor. Tests of this apparatus so far have been successful. An apparatus constructed on the same principle by another inventor, has been operated successfully in two hundred and eight feet of water.

An ingenious device intended to carry two men to a depth of four hundred feet or more consists of a hollow steel sphere, eight feet in diameter. The spherical form gives it the greatest possible resistance to water pressure. It is equipped with an electric motor which operates a screw propeller and a drill. Attached to the device outside of the sphere are eight powerful electromagnets supplied with current through a cable from the surface. It is the inventor's idea that this apparatus can be lowered alongside the hull of a steel or iron ship and, while still suspended from above, be manipulated into any position desired by means of its own propeller and rudder.

When the ends of the magnets are in contact with the metal side of the ship, the current is to be switched into the magnet coils, thus holding the whole mechanism firmly against the side of the wreck; the drill, operated from within the sphere, is then to be brought into play, to make a hole in the steel plating of the ship, to which pontoons, consisting of air-tight steel cylinders, are to be firmly attached. With a sufficient number of these pontoons attached to a wreck, and the water and air exhausted from their cylinders, it is expected that a ship of almost any size can be floated and towed to shallow water or a drydock.

ANOTHER type of treasure-seeking device, recently patented, consists of a steel cylinder, or tube, running vertically through the hull of a steamer so that it can be slid or telescoped down to the bottom of the ocean. The inventor of this device believes that work at considerable depths can be done with it, the operators descending from the ship through the tube to the point where the material to be salvaged lies.

One of the most promising devices for recovering sunken treasure is a new type of submarine boat recently constructed at Los Angeles. This boat, which has been successfully tested, is seventy-five feet long, seven and one-half feet beam, and weighs forty-three tons. Instead of storage batteries it is operated by a gas-engine which is said to work as well submerged as on the surface. A blower for forcing the exhaust gases through a valve in the hull is the main element that makes the submarine use of gas-engines possible. The propellers are placed at each side, a few feet aft of the bow, not only eliminating the tendency to dive, but giving greater speed when submerged than on the surface.

It is the plan of the builder of this submarine to construct one on the same plan, strong enough to withstand the pressure at a depth of one thousand feet, with a lifting capacity of seventy-five tons, and equipped

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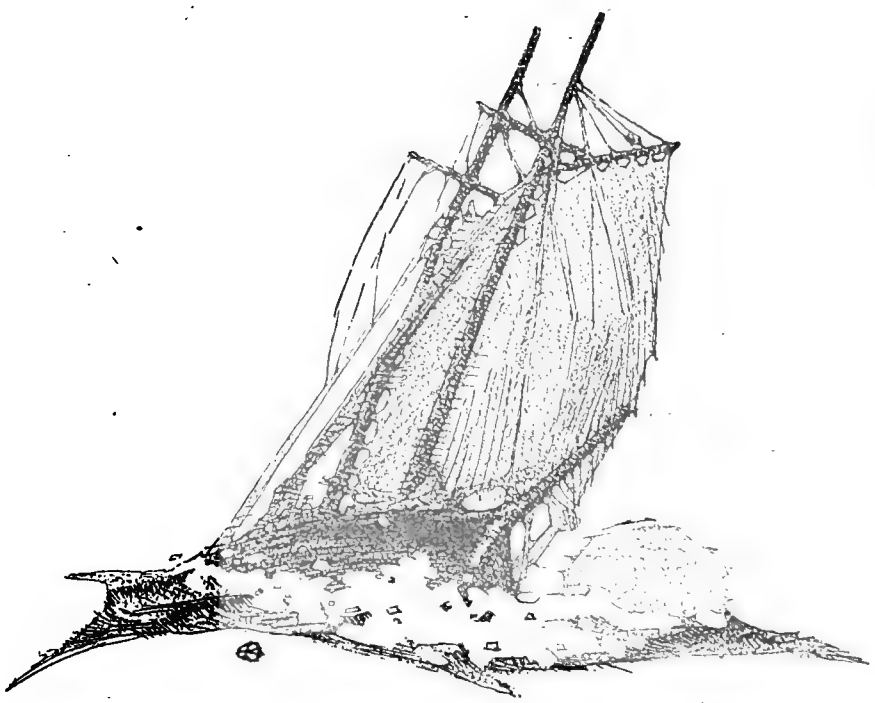
with grappling-hooks and clam-shell dredging-jaws which may be operated from within, as well as with powerful search-lights for throwing beams of light to the bottom of the sea. With this boat the inventors hope not only to recover much of the sunken treasure which has already been located, but to discover the exact whereabouts of other sunken treasure-ships, the present position of which is not definitely known.

The encouragement for inventors working along these lines is found in the knowledge already at hand of wrecks bearing treasure, many of which have been described in these articles.

Thus, since inventors and mechanics are turning their attention to the sunken-treasure problem, it would seem as though a brighter day were dawning for the seekers.

THE END



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SACRILEGIOUS JERRY

By Henry Oyen

Author of "The Man-Trail," "The Snow Burner," etc.

SACRILEGE was his affliction, said Desk Sergeant Cronin, as he made room in his collar with a hairy forefinger. Sacrilege was the ruination of him, and that's the whole, solemn truth of the matter. You know some men who are perfect in their line except for the one little streak that spoils them entirely? Well, so it was with this Jerry Coulon that we're speaking of.

Had he but stuck to straight stealing, realizing, as such a smart man as he should have done, that there are some things that even the smoothest thief must leave alone, he would probably be pursuing his happy, larcentious way to this day, as wicked and carefree and untroubled as a Summer breeze.

For we could do nothing with him. Try as we would—drag-net, stool-pigeon, every way—it was all the same to Jerry. We never caught him. He slipped away with a laugh at us for our pains, and stole as the spirit moved him, which it did whenever he was broke.

But, "Common graft?" says he to himself. "Oh, no!" says he. "Nothing like that for me. Gimme something original, something interesting, something different from the common stunts," he says. And then he breaks loose and pinches the holy things, and his goose is cooked.

Something like a haythen, you see, he was; a long, thin, loose-legged, freckle-faced, red-headed haythen, who was born and brought up in the district, and had a terrible sense of humor. Can you imagine such a haythen, especially with the touch of humor? If so, you have a moving picture of Jerry in your mind's eye. But that fatal sacrilegious streak in him got him at last and left a solemn warning to those who think to transgress all bounds and escape the punishment of those who go beyond the pale.

'Twas before I got the promotion. Finnucane and myself were working plain clothes in the Ghetto, and I cross over to split up a bunch of Hebrews who were crowding the walk so as to interfere with the wheels of progress and the sale of spoiled fish; and there in the middle of the bunch of them I find a specimen of Jerry Coulon's work. 'Twas the Rabbi of the neighborhood, a nice old body, who looked like a hundred years old and talked like a thousand; and 'twas hard not to call him Father when you passed him the time of day.

But this day, oh, it was different. The old boy was looking like a divil and talking like—well, he was an excited Rabbi this day, not to say any more; and he was making flat-handed passes around his head and spouting in a way that made the crowd stand back and listen with the soft palate. Oh, he was terribly disturbed—and about something wicked, 'twas easy enough to see that; though what it was, no man with common brains could hope to make out. So I put my hand easy on the little man's shoulder and I says, What holiday was this?

But my Rabbi man was too far up in the air to break in on his discourse, so one of the audience, a lad, butts in.

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"A man has stolen the Rabbi's book," says he. "He took it and ran away. It was a holy book," says he, "and the Rabbi is angry."

"Do you say so?" says I. "And what kind of a man was it stole it?"

"It was a ho-oly book," goes on the lad. "The Rabbi brought it far from the old country. A long, skinny redhead hits him on the head, like this—" says he, slapping his sconce with the flat of his hand. "Gimme the book," he says, and he takes it, and away he runs—fast."

"He usually does," says I; for that would be Jerry, especially the pat on the noodle. "What's the Rabbi say about it, son?"

"He says," says the lad, "that the feller who strikes a Rabbi and steals his book shall be punished," says he. "If he goes away, he shall have to come back. If he goes up in the air, or down in the ground, no matter where he goes," says he, "he will be found out and punished. It is an awful thing to slap a Rabbi on the head and steal his book. I'm glad I didn't do it," says he.

"Is it a curse, then, that he's reading on him?" says I.

"No, no, no!" The lad gets excited, like I'd suggested something indacent. "He just says that he shall be punished. The Rabbi says it is so. That is all."

"Sure thing," I says; and the Rabbi simmering down a little, I told him to step over to the station with me, and put it on the squeal book.

"We'll get your book back," says I, "if Jerry can pawn it."

But would you believe it, he wouldn't come? He only smiled at me, like I'd suggested something away beneath such as he—and perhaps I had.

"It is not for me to do such things," says he. "It is not necessary. I am not the one to punish him. He will suffer. He has struck me, so!" He bats himself on the bald spot. "And he shall pay," says he. "That is all."

"But the book?" I says. "You'll have to put in a description if you want it back."

"No," says he, shaking his head easy. "It will come back. He will be forced to give it back." And all as confident as if he'd had it straight from a fortune-teller.

Well, there was nothing more for me to do, so I went on, after distributing the bunch a little; and around the corner, in front of the Greek church, and less than a block from the Rabbi, what do I do but run into another crowd like the first, only altogether different.

'Twas the Greeks here; and the Greeks, being natural-born banana pedlers, are stronger in the lungs than the Hebrews, and apt to be loud about anything at all. I had to tear the clothes off the back of two of them before they would observe that I was among those present. Then they opened up and let me see the cause of the disturbance; and then I had to stop and gag myself to uphold the dignity of the department.

For, so help me, there in the middle of them was another holy man, but such a holy man as you nor any one else ever saw in your sober moments and lived to tell about. Half stripped! Half naked, on me word, and *mad!* The cassock had been stripped off him by a strong, skilled hand, regardless of consequences—pulled off him like the skin off a cat—and his suit must have been out getting pressed! Oh, a strange-looking holy man he was, though 'tisn't right to laugh at an accident to the cloth.

"What's the trouble?" says I, when I could speak with dignity.

"A man stole my clothes," says he.

"How?" says I.

"He come along. I am stepping out of the church. He grabs me. That is all I remember."

"Did you get a look at him?" I asked.

"A redhead," says he. "A long, skinny redhead; and——"

But I waited for no more.

"Wait," says I. But the priest was off on another speech.

"Oh, maybe the priest ain't roasting him!" sez a kid who was standing by. And oh, maybe he wasn't! Not that I could understand a word of it myself, you'll understand, but I knew just the same. Courting or cursing, you can tell 'em when they're being done right, no matter if it's deaf-and-dumb signs that's doing the work. And this was what you would call a good job, an all-around good job, with the other Greeks standing by and playing the chorus to help out.

"Stop!" says I, when there'd been too much of it. "Woman," says I to the nearest female, "loan your shawl to the good cause."

So I wrapped the priest up in a dacent

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enough way and sent him over to see the Captain by himself, it being necessary for me to get away a bit—for the dignity of the department.

WHILE I'm leaning against a doorway trying hard to remember something good for unseemly levity, along comes Finnucane.

"What's doing?" says he; and I told him as well as I could.

He spoke no word. He only stared at me and blinked, as if he doubted his ears were true to him. Then he says all of a sudden:

"Only come with me. Man, man, only come!"

He led the way around into Halsted on the run.

"Look upon it," says Finn, waving his hand. "Look upon it and guess the answer."

And there was another congregation, and more noise. But the noise was intelligent United States this time, for 'twas one Mrs. Dorney, born Mary McKeegan, who had the making of it, and a rational man could get head and tail of the matter. The woman had a little hole-in-the-wall store near the corner, where she kept snuff and tobacco, and images and crucifixes, and books and truck, along with some nice new antiques for the people who come slumming over here; and I knew her from girl up.

"What is it?" says I.

"Jerry Coulon," says she. "The saints help him if I ever put finger-nails to the freckled face of him!"

And with that she lifted her hands above her head and invited some of the blackest curses that ever found mouth room to come down and perch forever on Jerry's skinny neck. Oh, but she was harsh. The least she wished him was that he'd be thirty days and thirty nights a-dying, and have no priest or comfort before he went.

"What's he done, Mrs. Dorney?" says I.

"Done?" says she. "The worst thing in the world for him," says she. "He's stole my four-dollar Virgin, that's what he's done, the spawn of a black tribe; and he'll wish that he was never born. He comes in," says she, "with a book and a cassock under his arm; passes the time of day, and grabs the image and runs. And me petting him," says she, "and giving him cigarette papers till you couldn't rest when he was running around here in knee pants." She was experienced in giving opinions, was Mrs. Dorney, having had much practise on poor Dorney before she buried him.

"Take it easy," I says then. "We'll get your image for you."

"I doubt it," says the lady. "I doubt it a lot. But whether you do or not, the stealing of it will do him little good. I've put the curse of a lone woman on him," says she. "I've plastered him with curses. From you, you loafing police, he may escape. But ah, not from what's on him, the darling boy," says she; "not from what I've put upon his head!"

And then 'twas us who got her tongue, until we had to leave to keep from blushing.

But there you see how it was: the curses of three churches was upon Jerry for his unseemly transgressions, and the sequence which happened was inevitable as sure as you're born.

Though there's this to be said for him: considering the handicap that he'd put on himself, Jerry gave his doom a hot, hard run for its money, and no mistake. None could have hoped to last longer than did he; and many there are that would have succumbed at once. But Jerry, marked man as he was, went on with his side-stepping; and for a week it was the regular thing with him—the slick and slippery dodging, the same as it had been for years, and no signs to show that anything had changed.

Looking for Jerry was a chronic occupation in the precinct in those days, and Finnucane and myself were no more excited or hopeful than usual. The best we hoped for was that Mrs. Dorney might lay hands on him, and then we'd have pitied Jerry; for though a pest he was, he was not a lad deserving of cruel and unusual punishment.

Well, as I say, for a week he kept clear of the fate that was dogging him, and then it began to work. We had definite word of the lad, where he'd tried to sell Mrs, Dorney's Virgin to a saloon-keeper out Blue Island way, wearing the Greek's cassock the while and passing himself off for a new order of Brother. The man ordered him out in short order, not being of the Church, and Jerry of course came around the bar and poked his front teeth down his throat for showing disrespect for the cloth. And then—two days later—he was spotted in the precinct, and in comes a stool-pigeon with word that he'd been seen around the old corners, rushing the growler and wearing

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the cassock inside out for a disguise. And after that—to show you how invincible was the doom upon him—next day I saw Jerry in the flesh myself.

I was not hunting of him. You might say the thing was thrust upon me. 'Twas crap-shooters I was after in the alley behind the long tenement on the corner; and while I'm standing betwixt a shed and a fence, out from the building comes a voice that I knew was familiar of old. There was a window open in the second floor, and 'twas from here that the voice came, and the sounds of some scuffling with it.

Says the voice:

"Maggie, d'you mean to say you can't sing that? My Gawd," it says, "what's the use of the musical education your mother didn't get you at such pains," it says, "if you can't sing the music I get you regardless of trouble or expense to others? You're stubborn," it says. "You don't want to soothe me with song."

Then a woman says:

"Ow, —— you! Let loose of me arm. 'Twon't do any good to pinch me," says she. "Nobody can sing that. That ain't music; it's Yiddish print," she says.

"Yiddish print!" says the man, scornful. "'Tis 'Bill Bailey' in Gaelic, Maggie," says he. "Sing it or I'll play it to you with me foot."

"Ouch!" says the woman, then. "Oh, Jerry, Jerry! Please don't." And I was up at the door at the second "Jerry."

"No, don't, Jerry," says I, breaking in. "There's some mistake. There will be no concert today. You come with me and I'll sing you the tune in the wagon. You'll have enough time to practise now, Jerry," says I. "Only come dacently."

'Twas a small back room; one table, two chairs, one window, and that shut; one door, and me in that—I had him like a cow at the bottom of a well. But says he:

"I can't. I got other things to do." And with that he lands me square over the eyes with the book in his hand and jumps. And I pick the book up, and what do I find but the Rabbi's prayer-book!

Where did he jump? Where but through the closed window? Head first he went, and the thing gives way and out goes sash and glass, and Jerry and all, straight out into the air-shaft of the building.

"Oh, he's killed!" says the girl. "He's killed—he's killed!"

"Let us hope he is," says I. But when I looked, there was no sign of him at the bottom, though 'twas a twenty-foot fall if an inch, the shaft running down into the basement. Why he wasn't spread out amongst the broken glass and wood, I don't know, but he wasn't; and when I got down, there was no sign of him—nothing but the smashed-up sash that must have broke his fall. I run out into the alley and came slam against Finnucane.

"Did you see him?" says I.

"See who?" says he.

"Jerry Coulon," I says.

"What?" says he. "D'you mean to say you've seen the boy?" Then I told him all about ut.

He was fat then, was Finnucane—they've trained him down since, hauling him up before the Board, but he was fat then—and it was some minutes before he had control of himself.

"Well," says he, studying the lumps over my eyes, "the Rabbi was right. He had to give up the holy book." And then he gave way again.

I was ugly from being marked, and I says:

"Shut up and use what passes for brains in your fat skull. If Jerry had come out this way do you think you would have seen him?"

"Couldn't have helped it," says he. "And there's a uniform man directly in front the house at this minute."

"Then he couldn't have come out of the building," says I.

"And if he didn't come out," says Finn, "he must be inside—if you're sure you saw him."

"Go ahead," says I. "You're displaying almost human intelligence. 'Tis my idea that Jerry is somewheres peeking out at us at this minute."

"Yes," says Finn; "but," says he, looking at the building, which was a dozen numbers long, "amongst that bunch in there Jerry could be hidden till 'twould require divine guidance to find him. Why," says he, "every flat in there would open up and hide him in the stove."

"But the curses were working strong by this time, you'll understand; and I up and swore that we'd go through the flat that night, first looking up and down the alley sheds and going away disappointed to let Jerry see that we'd given him up again.

So when we'd done this we got a couple of

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uniform men to watch the building to see he didn't leave, and that night—a fine black night it was, I mind—I put a couple of brass rings into me ears and a red handkerchief around my neck, and some overalls on me; and Finnucane—I forget how Finnucane was bedecked, but I remember he was a steam-fitter, and he wouldn't speak to me, a dago who dug sewers for a living.

I was looking for some Black Hand kin o' mine who lived in the building, but I didn't know the flat; and Finn was after a brother steam-fitter who hadn't taken out a working card for the last quarter. He took the first floor; I took the second.

The third place I knocked—in the Irish section it was—there was poor Mrs. Dorney's Virgin sitting on the table under the clock, for all the world like there it belonged; and at the same time I see the woman make a move toward an inside door.

"WHERE'VE you hid Jerry Coulon?" says I to the man who was eating supper; and I twisted his ear a little and pointed to the incriminating image, to make my meaning clear. He looked up and saw that I was no real dago, and choked on a piece of bread.

"Let go," says he. "I'm new here. I know no Coulon but a gas inspector who's married to a cousin of mine."

"Never mind," says I. "What of the statue?"

"The Holy Virgin?" says he.

"The same," says I.

"Bought it from a priest."

"What kind of a priest?"

He looked up and choked again.

"A thick-set, short, black-haired priest, wearing a light tan overcoat, and about fifty years old," says he, like he'd learned it by heart. And at that, Jerry, who'd been cramped under the sofa in the next room, broke out with a laugh, swings open a door and jumped out into the other hall, running through the flat. So I landed the man so he sprawled backwards, and through the flat I went, calling to Finn. But Jerry'd locked the door after him, and it took me some time to kick it down, and when I got out in the hall there was nothing to see or hear and mighty little of that.

"Finn," I says, "he's gone down to you."

"Not yet," says he. "I was here all the time; and there's no back stairs in the hall, either. And say," says he, "he slammed no second door."

At that I was thinking he was still in the flat, but then I saw 'way over in the corner of the hall, where 'twas dark, the ladder that ran up through the hole in the roof. Now mark the fine workmanship of Fate, if you please; for this ladder was too big to be pulled up through the hole, and most of such ladders are not!

My heart sunk for a fact, though, as I thought of the ways Jerry would have of getting away once he was on the roof; but up the ladder I went, hand over hand, telling Finnucane to come up and follow me. And once I had stuck my head through the hole I says, "Gone, after all," for 'twas so dark up there I stopped dead still until a brick took me in the shoulder, and I knew there was still hope.

"Give up, Jerry, I got you covered," says I, starting forward; and then he laughed, behind me of course, and started away across the gravel, with me following him as best I could by the sound of his feet, and knowing no more where I was going than a vag' when he's up before the Old Man.

Behind me Finnucane crawled up through the hole and rolled over on his side and enjoyed himself, for I was having the very helluva time up there on the treacherous roof, the clothes-lines being strung here and there just neck high and catching me under the chin and heaving me back in a lump every so often. And Finnucane made no move to help me.

"Up again, my lad," says he, when I'd go down. "Try again—" until I could have killed him.

But Jerry was having the same trouble as myself; and one of the ropes having half broken his neck, he'd lost his sense of location and was running around wild, keeping as far from me as he could by the sound of my feet, just as I was chasing him by the sound of his. Oh, it was fancy while it lasted, though I tired of it after no long while.

"Help me corner him, you scut," says I, stopping short.

"Not I," says Finn. "He's ducked me too often in daylight. What chance have we here in the dark?" says he.

"Then go, and the saints keep you next time, Jerry Coulon," says I, making one last, wild rush in the dark at the sound of his steps.

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And then it was all over. The noise of his feet stopped, almost within arms' reach of me. They quit like he'd had wings.

"Gone again," sings Finnucane. "Come on, man." And some more that I never heard; for just then the roof quit under me, and my steps stopped, too, and I stepped finely out upon the night air, going at top speed.

I turned over twice. I thought of the wife and kids as I started. I mind being glad at the first revolution that I had me insurance paid up and all but five hundred paid off on the cottage.

"The boys'll take care of that," I thought at the second twist, and I had a prayer well started by the time I landed. I did, so help me! The mind works fast when it's only got a few seconds left to do business in.

But that wasn't my last moment, as you may have suspected by this time. I wasn't even hurt in the fall, thanks be to the saints. I landed square on top of something long and soft that lay struggling in the alley, and that kept me from taking harm.

It said "Uff!" when I hit it. I knocked the wind out of it, you'll understand. It was the Greek priest's cassock. Jerry Coulon was tangled up inside.

A CASE IN DIPLOMACY

By Daniel Louis Hanson

Author of "The Conquest of the Missouri," "Frontier Ballads," etc.

HIDDEN away back of the Royal Palace in Christiania is a street which, while not the most interesting in the city, is of international importance — Incognito Gaten. This thoroughfare, which is better known in Downing Street and Friedreichstrasse and on the Quai d'Orsay than it is even by the residents of the Norwegian metropolis, is only half a kilometer in length, running in a northerly direction from Drammen Road to Uranienborg Road. The chance passer-by looks up its shadowy length, laughs at its name and walks on. But Incognito Gaten has played a decisive rôle in many of the convulsive movements that have shaken Europe during the last forty years.

Incognito Street is lined with villas tucked away under the evergreen foliage of pines and fir, with a denser curtain, in Summer, of deciduous shrubbery. Even the doorways are shrouded in mystery. But on festal days Incognito Street becomes gay with a display of flags—for this street is the diplomatic compound of the Norwegian capital.

Such is Incognito Street today; and such it was on that June morning, ten years ago, when Ramsen sat and drank his cup of breakfast coffee in the Grand Café. At the same time Ramsen read *Morgen Bladet*. As he glanced rapidly down its columns his eye caught this item:

> Count Dimitri, accredited to Norway as minister from Vodolia, arrived in Christiania yesterday and has leased the Bergheim Villa in Incognito Gaten.

The student of present-day European politics may have some difficulty in locating the Kingdom of Vodolia. Yet maps show

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it indistinctly between Austria and Russia, its autonomy having been swallowed up, some years since, by the bureaucracy of the Czar. But at the beginning of the century Vodolia was an independent kingdom and, because of its strategical position, exercised a great influence among the powers.

Ramsen was conscious of a fleeting sense of curiosity as to why Vodolia should at that late day avail itself of a privilege hitherto neglected, that of representation at the Norwegian Court. Then the incident was crowded from his mind by despatches from South Africa, which at that time was holding the world's attention.

Ramsen finished his coffee, then slowly strolled up Carl Johans Boulevard to Akers Street, where he was quickly lost to sight in the doorway of a tall building. Short as Ramsen's walk had been, he had attracted the attention of several pedestrians, two of whom turned to look after his tall figure.

"Odd chap, that Ramsen. He writes one play a year that has a week at the National Theater, another seven days at Bergen and then is never heard of again. But he is popular in diplomatic circles."

Ramsen, meantime, had ascended two flights of stairs and hurried through his apartments. At the end of a long, dark hall he opened a door in response to a vigorous, "Come in."

The room or cabinet into which he entered was lined with low bookcases, above which hung large maps. In the center of it was a large, flat-top desk, at which sat one whose fame was known in every court —Herr Tronsen, State's Minister of Norway. He smiled a welcome.

"Good morning, Herr Ramsen, you have seen the *Morgen Bladet?*"

He pointed to a seat on the other side of the desk.

"I noted that Count Dimitri, the new minister from Vodolia is to be a near neighbor of yours," nodded Ramsen, leaning forward. "Why should she want representation? These years are her last——"

"*Aften Bladet* will have another bit of news," the minister broke in. "Prince Jablonsky, the Russian minister, will soon leave for Riviera because of poor health, and Count Dimitri will look after the Czar's interests during the prince's absence."

Silence followed, then Herr Tronsen continued meaningly:

"During the next few days get acquainted with the Vodolian minister. And learn his secret despatch-code. Here is a copy of the first despatch to him."

He handed the yellow tissue to Ramsen.

"What foreign men-of-war are in our waters?" asked Ramsen.

"A dozen German in Hardanger Fjord, and a couple of French in the Sogne Fjord. You are still thinking of——"

"Yes. Affairs look bad in the Transvaal, and if anything should happen to weaken the prestige of England—then it is 'Poor Norway!' Hence this unusual Vodolia incident renews my fears. I noticed a Russian man-of-war near the fortress last night."

"Yes, it is the *Kronstadt*, which is to carry Prince Jablonsky to the Riviera in a few days."

"And our fleets, your Excellency?"

"Ten torpedo-boats are at Horten, two at Bergen and six at Trondhjem. I hope you are wrong, Ramsen, but your despondency is contagious."

The young man arose and pointed to a wall-map with a ruler.

"In Tromsoe Parish, your Excellency, will be our difficulty. From the Finnish frontier to Lyngenfjord is only fifty miles—all that stands between Russia and the all-year harbor from which she can command the Atlantic."

The minister's eyes followed the pointer.

"I have been over every foot of the ground," continued Ramsen. "You know my reports detail the two-track railroad which comes from the east to a little Lap village, Silasstuen, only four miles from our frontier.

"Between there and the Lyngenfjord lies our mountain barrier. It means four miles of tunneling. But there is an easier route which follows the gorges. That Russia has done surveying we know, and I am not sure, that in the year which has elapsed since I was there, but that she may have done actual work."

"I don't like the situation myself," frowned the minister. "Russia and France are in alliance against England; Germany has administered a slap to Great Britain through the Kaiser's telegram of congratulation to Kruger. England herself is dreadfully busy in South Africa—one more setback, a failure to take either Johannesburg or Pretoria, and——"

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A deputy brought in a card.

"Here is Count Dimitri," said Tronsen, "presumably to present his credentials. Just take a seat to one side while I talk with the gentleman."

COUNT DIMITRI, short and stocky, had the appearance of a Slav. He spoke in German to Herr Tronsen. The ceremony of presenting and receiving the credentials was a short one. As the count was about to leave, the State's Minister said in a voice diplomatic enough to betray no meaning—

"I understand that Russia leaves her interests in your hands during Prince Jablonsky's absence."

"And I regret that the prince is compelled to leave," replied the count, "as I had looked forward to learning your city and country under his tutelage; now I shall feel a stranger."

"Not at all, my dear count—we Norwegians are hospitable. You will find a fine group of young men in Christiania who will feel delighted in extending to you their good offices. Here, for instance, is Herr Ramsen, one of the nation's leading dramatists—let me present him to you. He speaks every European language and knows not only the city and its environments, but the rest of Norway, as well as you do your Vodolia."

The conversation became general for a few minutes, then Count Dimitri withdrew, bespeaking for himself a visit from Ramsen in the near future.

An hour later Herr Ramsen laid before the State's Minister the translation of the cipher despatch. It was well toward evening when the two men arose from a study of atlases and time-tables. The minister put his hand on Ramsen's shoulder.

"For the present this matter must remain between you and me. We must be certain of our position before we talk. This means a great deal of work for you, but sometime Norway will know and reward you.

"If you take the eight o'clock express this evening you will reach Trondhjem early tomorrow afternoon, where one of the torpedo-boats will be at your service. God bless you, Ramsen; a great deal more than simply the welfare of Norway depends upon your work."

II

TEN days later Herr Tronsen sat alone in his cabinet, waiting. As the clock pointed a little after the noon hour there was a knock at the private door, which he hastened to open. Edward Ramsen stepped in.

"You don't know, Ramsen, how glad I am to see you. But you look fagged out! Sit down, and when you are rested tell me all about it."

"Thank you, your Excellency. On reaching Trondhjem I found a torpedo-boat, the *Bernadotte*, waiting for me at the quay. We arrived at Tromsoe the next noon. There I left the *Bernadotte*, drove across the peninsula to Bredvik, then over the Ulfsfjord and a narrow neck of land to Fastdal. From there I took the little despatch-boat, the *Jarl*, up the Lyngenfjord and its continuation, the Storfjord, to the very head of that system of waterways—Kildalen; from that point to the Finnish frontier is forty-five miles.

"It was a question of walking. So I took with me one man, a Lapp who knew the country thoroughly, and started eastward. The Storfjord River flows into the fjord itself at Kildalen, so we followed the valley toward its headwaters. We had not gotten over twenty miles on our journey before we came across groups of men building a roadway in the valley along the Storfjord River. Most of them were Lapps, the rest Finlanders. There seemed to be no secrecy about the work; the men and even some of the foremen in their ignorance spoke about it as a carriage road, and the impression was that the Norwegian Government was doing the work.

"Your Excellency understands, of course, that this is a very wild section of the country. The timber is heavy, there is little grass even in the most favorable Summers, and this year, because of the lack of rain, there is none at all. There is no traffic through that section except Lapps in their migrations to and from the sea. As this is an unfavorable season, they are glad to earn money wherewith to tide over next Winter.

"I found that the road-builders were following very closely the valley of the Storfjord River, deviating from it only when they could save a couple of miles by cutting across the country. I found only one

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tunnel, and that a short one. The trees that had been felled were, in most cases, worked up into ties which were piled along the right of way. Work was being carried on night and day, as there is no darkness that far north in Summer-time. We were about thirty-seven miles from the fjord when we came to the first rails——"

"You mean that Russia has actually laid rails on Norwegian soil!"

"Yes, your Excellency, about eight miles have already been laid, and at their present rate of progress the task will be finished by September."

Herr Tronsen took a couple of turns around the room.

"Now show me exactly the route you followed."

"Right here, your Excellency, from Kildalen, on the Storfjord, or Lyngenfjord, along the valley of the Storfjord river to this watershed which they partly climb and partly tunnel. Then over this section, which is a plateau, to the frontier. Beyond that I walked another five miles to Silasstuen, in Finland, from which two railway tracks diverge, one to the south along the Terne River to the Gulf of Bothnia, being a quick route to St. Petersburg. The other runs east to Kandalak Bay, on the White Sea, through which is an outlet to the Arctic Ocean."

"You went as far as Silasstuen, in Finland?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

"Did you see much railway equipment there?"

"A hundred cars of rails, your Excellency, and several of spikes."

The State's Minister figured rapidly.

"Not quite enough for ten miles even of the lightest rails."

"I imagine, your Excellency, that in event of the realization of certain hopes which Russia, France, and possibly Germany, have as to the outcome of South African affairs, those rails will be delivered by steamer, at Kildalen, and the road built from the west through our territory."

"I wish that we had thought of photographs."

"I did, your Excellency. Here are the negatives, and I also took the latitude and longitude."

"God bless you, Ramsen! When Norway becomes a republic— There, there, I'll be hanged for treason yet."

There was a silence in the cabinet as Herr Tronsen closely examined the negatives with a strong lens.

"Herr Ramsen, you have done wonders for your country, but you are still at the beginning. Bjornson is in London; and you must take these negatives, with your story, to him. He will know what to do. How soon can you be ready?"

"I am ready now, your Excellency."

"Well said! In an hour, then, you will find the fastest cruiser in our navy at Fortress Quay. It will land you in London tomorrow night. I shall cable Bjornson, who is at Berner's, so that he will be waiting for you. While you are getting ready to go aboard I will prepare a letter to him."

An hour later Herr Tronsen looked from one of the towers of Akerhus Fortress at the cruiser *Valkyrie* as she took the channels seaward between the islands.

THE following Monday two visitors sat in Herr Tronsen's cabinet, the older of them bearing a name that for many years had been honored throughout the world. He concluded his narrative with—

"But this is the man to whom all the praise and thanks should be given." And he put his hand on Ramsen's shoulder.

"With two such representatives at the Court of St. James, Norway could not help but win," replied diplomatic Tronsen. "But there is yet more to be done. Count Dimitri has been busy with St. Petersburg for several days. A dozen cablegrams have been received and sent by him during the last twenty-four hours; from these translations you can see how serious the affair is. We have enough evidence of his intentions to justify hanging him—but there are other ways. But he must be stopped. On the tenth he gives a fête of some kind, and then we must hit hard. Herr Ramsen and I will talk over different plans, but there is no question but that we then must get Count Dimitri and his despatch-box."

III

MAY twenty-fifth will long be recorded in the annals of Incognito Street as the date on which Count Dimitri celebrated the birthday of the King of Vodolia. From early afternoon till long past the midnight hour the thoroughfare

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was crowded with carriages of all descriptions.

At six o'clock a banquet was served to the diplomatic corps and the leading government chiefs. Later in the evening a reception, concluding with a luncheon, was tendered to the acquaintances that Count Dimitri had made during his sojourn in Christiania; among them was Edward Ramsen.

The lights of the Bergheim Villa shone yellow in contrast to the bright colors that suffused the northern skies till near the midnight hour. The palatial apartments of Christiania's most magnificent residence were crowded with guests who wandered about, voicing their admiration for the works of art in painting and sculpture that were to be seen on all sides.

The library, located on the second floor, used by the count as an executive office, was a handsome apartment fronting the street, but screened from it by dense foliage. Among its other embellishments was a large vault built into one corner, which attracted the attention of the guests, for at one time it had been the repository of the famous Bergheim diamonds, the theft of which from that very place of security had nearly involved Germany and Spain in war. The huge, steel door seemed impregnable with its heavy hinges and elaborate locks.

It was after one o'clock when luncheon was served in the large dining-room. This apartment was situated in the first story, with large windows opening out into the garden. Gay-colored paper lanterns were distributed underneath the pine trees, and a fountain splashed musically in a corner of the garden wall. Edward Ramsen sat at the right of Count Dimitri, while at the left was Dr. Hefte. The rest of the twoscore guests arranged themselves as fancy or choice of companions dictated.

As the many courses were served the fun grew fast and furious—none, however, outdoing the host, who for the second time in eight hours presided at a festive board. Stories were told, repartee flashed from end to end of the long tables, but always it was the count's voice that could be heard above that of all the others.

The clocks were chiming the hour of three when Count Dimitri proposed a toast to the King of Norway. This was followed by a like courtesy to the King of Vodolia; both these *skaals* were quaffed standing. The guests then seated themselves, but the count remained on his feet.

"The other night I heard Herr Nordrak sing, and it seemed as if I never had heard his equal. Now I am going to ask——"

His sentence never was finished; the crack of a revolver from the garden, followed by two other reports from above, cut short his words. At the same time the secretary of the legation burst into the room crying—

"The library, the library!"

The count dropped his glass and rushed from the room, with Ramsen at his heels and the rest of the guests trooping after. Up the stairs the leaders went, three steps at a time, turning sharply to the right at the top into the library, the door of which stood open. Dimitri and Ramsen were lost to view for a few seconds, during which another shot rang from the garden. When the crowd poured into the library the count lay full length on the floor, with Ramsen bending over him. Ramsen was the first to recover his presence of mind.

"My friends, please keep back; you are in danger here." Still another shot lent force to his remarks. "Dr. Hefte, you come in, and the rest of you search the garden and send for the police——"

Slowly the crowd withdrew so that Ramsen could close the door, which he also locked, leaving him with Dr. Hefte and the unconscious Dimitri.

"Hefte, I need five minutes; your patient must not revive until then. I will explain everything to you later——"

He was already fumbling at the dial on the vault; a minute later and there was a click. He threw the tumblers back and swung open the steel door. On the vault floor stood a small iron box.

This he pulled out, pried open the lid and filled his pockets with the papers it contained. This done, he shoved it back into its place, closed the vault door and turned on the combination. Dr. Hefte still was kneeling beside the prostrate count.

"You need not feel for any wounds," said Ramsen. "There aren't any. But we must get him to Akerhus Fortress before he becomes conscious. Just listen to me, Hefte, and do as I say. I will explain later. That must be the police."

There was a knock at the door; he opened it.

"Ah! is that you, Chief? Come in; but

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first send your men after a stretcher and a carriage. Now come in."

The three men behind the closed door talked for a few minutes in low tones.

"You will have to do it, Hefte—just a small dose; he must not come to till we have him at Akerhus. Oh, no, I just hit hard. I know it, but he has done worse to us.

"The shots? We had to do something. First we thought of a fire, but this seemed better and surer——"

The unconscious form of the count was carried down-stairs and placed in the carriage. A crowd made up of guests and neighbors, together with a few police, had gathered outside of the gate. Ramsen called out so that all could hear—

"To the hospital!"

The carriage traveled north for a square, then, turning east, skirted the Royal Palace Park. At the foot of the hill, Ramsen gave another direction to the driver—

"To Akerhus Fortress, and quick, too!"

Three hours later Herr Ramsen sat drinking coffee at the Grand Café, at the same time reading a little five-line item in *Morgen Bladet* of an attempted robbery at a residence in the western part of the city. He smiled and muttered to himself—

"There is no diplomat in all Europe equal to our State's Minister."

IV

ON THE evening of June first, Herr Tronsen's carriage was seen driving down Kirke Gaten to Grev Wedels Plads, through that and over the drawbridge into Akerhus Fortress. Wearily the aged minister climbed the narrow stairs and entered the hall.

"Bring in the count," he said to a guard.

A moment later there was a sound of footsteps in the corridor, a rattle of chains at the door, and Count Dimitri came in, accompanied by two custodians. The Vodolian, however, saw standing in the center of the hall the alert, well-knit figure of the State's Minister, on whose face there was now not a trace of weariness. The count strode across the floor till he stood opposite Herr Tronsen.

"Your Excellency's hospitality is oppressive—actually confining. Possibly my Government may be able to express its gratitude warmly enough for the treatment accorded to its representative——"

The State's Minister made no reply, so Dimitri continued:

"I am assaulted in my own legation—probably I was robbed at the same time. Then, in an unconscious condition, I am carted through your streets—not to a hospital, but to a fortress where for a week I am held prisoner, unable to communicate with my Government, not even allowed to hear the news of the outside world. This is an outrage, your Excellency, which not only Vodolia will not condone, but one which other——"

"I hardly think, Count Dimitri, that you will hold me personally responsible for the assault that occurred in your residence. The shots that startled you and your guests were fired by one of your servants who was drunk. I am not absolutely convinced that you were assaulted at all. No one was seen striking you; even Herr Ramsen, who was with you, saw no assailant. Is it not possible that you tripped and struck your head in falling? You were brought to Akerhus to insure your getting the rest that an accident of that nature called for. Treatment for concussion of the brain, my dear count, consists in absolute rest; and neither telegrams nor newspapers are sedative in their effect."

"But my secretary? Why was not he allowed to see me?"

"Simply because we believe that your secretary is mentally affected. Your secretary, my dear count, is suffering from illusions—delusions—hallucinations—I hardly know what term to use. He is laboring under the belief that you have been plotting against the peace and welfare of Norway. In his ravings he insists that you were in the employ of Russia; and he muttered about an open harbor, a railway, a Russian fleet—and what not?"

The State's Minister stood so that the light from the western windows fell on Dimitri's face, while his own was in the shadow.

"Simply ravings," muttered the count, when the silence had continued so long that he felt he was expected to make reply.

"Oh, certainly, simply ravings. But he was consistent in them—you know the insane are frequently so. A cablegram came for you; as you were still unconscious, we gave it to him simply to soothe him. His transcript of it was amusing; I have it here: 'How many cruisers do you need at Christiania and at Tromsoe?' Amusingly odd, was it not?

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"As it seemed to humor him we let him send a reply: 'Have six in Christiania, July seventeenth.' Ridiculous, of course—simply the hallucinations of a diseased mind. Have you ever seen the fjord from this window, Count Dimitri? Come and see the colors of our Summer sun tint the waters as evening comes on. Magnificent, is it not? Why! What is that? Men-of-war—Russian, too! Let us count them. Six!"

The count gripped the window-bars till his fingernails showed white.

"We were sorry for your secretary—insanity is a pitiful affliction. To make things easier for him we humored him again. The railway seemed to vex him most of all. So, just to humor him—for no other purpose—we sent north a couple of thousand troops and blew up seven miles of railway track with dynamite. Ha, ha! Was not that humorous? And the funniest part of it all was that he insisted Russia had built them."

"I don't see how you can connect me with the ravings of a drunken secretary—or, possibly, a bribed one," sneered Dimitri.

"Sit down, my dear count; sit down. We don't connect you with them. Why, he even insisted, in his disconnected, rambling speech that your despatch-box had been stolen. To relieve his mind we had your vault opened, and the box was there!" Herr Tronsen heard the sigh of relief that came from the Vodolian. "And he insisted upon opening it—it was empty!"

Dimitri sprang from his chair and rushed toward Herr Tronsen.

"What is the use of this boyish play? What are you going to do about it? We—Russia, both of us, are bigger than you are; we—she is going to have an open all-year harbor. Who is going to hinder her? Do you know that all I have to do is to signal that fleet of Russian boats, and your Christiania with its two hundred thousand people would be shelled before midnight? You are trying bluff, diplomacy, in either case mere words, against our shot and shell. Your England is declining; we have France, Germany, Austria and even Italy with us!"

Herr Tronsen, who had arisen, walked to the other end of the hall and drew aside the curtain.

"Come here, Count Dimitri, and see this view of the fjord toward the open sea. See the sloping hills—ah! You are looking at those twelve cruisers which float the English flag! Or, possibly, at the eighteen torpedo-boats, which, you see, are Norwegian. You were speaking of signals, Count Dimitri; a signal of my hand to that guard yonder, who does not understand a word of our speech, would be communicated by him to Hoveoen, yonder—the pushing of a mere button, over there, would explode the submarine mines over which your Russian warships are floating. Or, let your fleet escape from its present anchorage—does its commander know how many mines or shore batteries it would have to pass before reaching the open sea at Faerder Light?"

There was absolute silence in the hall.

"Count Dimitri, Norway does not want war, but peace; and in order to enjoy that peace she has so protected her enormous coast-line that it is invincible— No, you don't!"

Dimitri had leaped forward at Herr Tronsen, who quickly stepped to one side, while the guards ran forward and pinioned the Vodolian's arms.

"And the England, which you say is declining to her fall, today stands higher than ever in prestige. This is the first of June. On May thirty-first—that was yesterday—her troops entered Pretoria, and the Boer leaders signed terms of surrender. Your own country, Vodolia, because of your foolish, futile attempts, will lose her autonomy at the forthcoming European Congress. And Russia is farther from the Atlantic tonight than she ever has been."

Dimitri stood between the two guards who held his arms.

"What are you going to do with me?" he sullenly asked.

"You will embark in a few minutes on our fast cruiser *Viking*, which will land you either at Stettin or Riga—unless you prefer to seek the hospitality of the Russian fleet?"

"That would be worse than yours, Herr State's Minister. I fancy neither Riga nor Stettin. If I had my money I would choose England, for Vodolia has no use for a man who has failed, even through no fault of his own. I myself have taken part in courts-martial."

"There were fifty thousand roubles in your vault, Count Dimitri; these will be returned to you, and you will be landed—in England."

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THE TRAIL OF THE MEAT

by Samuel Alexander White

Author of "The Posts of Pillage," "The Making of Louis Lavergne," etc.

LYING flat upon the Donjek River bench-ground some distance north of where the Kluane River joined it, Eric Sark vainly endeavored at one and the same time to hug the earth for concealment and to sight over his partner Bassett's shoulder through the fringing spruce which screened the valley to the east.

"Tom, Tom," he demanded in an ultra-anxious whisper, "have we struck them this time?"

"Plumb centered 'em!" Bassett replied. "Jist take one luxurious look at that mob!"

Tom squeezed to one side. Sark squirmed into his place and gazed up the valley at the migrating horde of caribou swarming along it.

For though, over the maze of hills and valleys lying between the White and the Donjek Rivers, they had hung for days on the flanks of the herd, neither of the partners had got a chance before to view its main proportions. Now they glimpsed it head-on, an immense army, browning the valley-bottom and hillsides, and heading straight down to swim the Donjek and range southward across the upper reaches of the Kluane.

"One million, three hundred and thirty-three, Eric, countin' the ones we don't see!" breathed Bassett, an exultant note in his voice.

"I'll accept your estimate, Tom! I sure wouldn't want the job of counting them."

"That's an easier job now, pardner, than it will be ten seconds from now. Look how quiet they browse, almost like cattle. But thar's chain-lightnin' action thar all the same, and our first shot'll start it. Are you lyin' right, Eric? Got elbow-room for the throw-up?"

"Sure, Tom, lots of room!" Sark gave his arms an experimental jerk, and drew forward the sagging side-pockets of his mackinaw coat in order to have free access to the cartridges they contained. "Say when!"

For the space of ten tense seconds the men waited, while the unsuspicious horde came steadily nearer, the number in sight being augmented every second by fresh bands crowding up behind. With the onward motion of those upon the slopes the very hillsides seemed to turn fluid and slide along in waves, while down in the valley itself they thronged rank upon rank, traveling in a score of parallel trails.

Now Sark and Bassett could see among them hundreds whose brown Summer coats were in the process of changing to the Winter coats of white and gray. Soon they could note here and there the small, slender, delicate horns of the females in contrast to the enormous antlers of the males. And at last they could mark the huge, cloven hoofs of both sexes, spreading greatly as they traveled, and ploughing the valley-bottom trails out in furrows a foot deep.

They were only about seventy-five yards away, and in another moment they would surge over the bench-land for the river crossing.

"Now!" whispered Bassett.

Both rifles spat together; two big bucks

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slumped over; while the whole herd suddenly milled up in frantic confusion. Rank shuttled swiftly through rank in the valley, dashed from side to side, and swung in snorting circles, not knowing in the first moment of attack where safety lay. But the thinning of those ranks below the steep of the bench ground and the continuous rattle of the rifles as Sark and Bassett pumped their magazines, betrayed the spot from which the unseen death was winging, and the whole vast army swerved with one impulse to the left, speeding up the slope, and thundering over the ridge to a second valley beyond.

And fast as the caribou sped, the partners still kept dropping them. They dropped them all the way across the valley-bottom. They dropped them all the way up the hillside. They dropped them on the ridge where they reared in leaping silhouettes against the sky-line. Tom and Eric emptied their magazines, filled them again and emptied them once more, and as the last of the horde topped the ridge, they were throwing in shells by twos and threes, to get in the greatest number of shots before the animals should entirely disappear.

IT WAS wizard work. The sagging pockets of Sark's mackinaw coat now sagged no longer. At the end he was clutching in the bottoms of those pockets for cartridges that were not there.

"Thunderation!" he exclaimed, as he watched a score of bounding animals pound unmolested over the ridge. "I'm clean pumped out, Tom. Give me some more shells. I can drop another couple."

Bassett hurriedly jabbed his right hand into his right pocket. It came out empty. He jabbed it into his left pocket and pulled forth three cartridges. He shoved them out to Sark and then drew them back again. The excitement died out of his face, and he gazed thoughtfully at the three brass cases on his flattened palm.

"Here quick!" Eric begged, snatching at them. "Give them to me. They'll be all gone in a second."

"Wait, pardner!" counseled Tom drawing his hand away. "We sure bin wastin' lead faster'n I figured. I've three here and one in my gun. That's four. I had fifty-four. So I've fired fifty."

"Well, what about it? I've fired sixty-one, and I can fire four more and make two hits out of the four. Here, quick!"

"No sir, we gotta save them four." Bassett resignedly ejected the unused shell from the chamber of his rifle, placed it alongside the other three on his palm, and with a resolute air pocketed the four. "We sure gotta save them four, Eric."

"What for?" expostulated Sark. "We won't need to fire a shot between here and Dawson City. We won't need to kill any game on the way down. Haven't we tons of meat out yonder?"

"On course we have, pardner, but we gotta save them four shells all the same."

"But what for, I ask?"

"Gen'rul principles."

Sark snorted in disgust, and eyed the empty sky-line on the ridge.

"Well, they're saved alright," he observed sarcastically. "There's nothing in sight to use them on now. You ought to be proud of your parsimonious mind, Tom. You've saved four shells worth seven and a-half cents each, and you've let go six hundred pounds of caribou venison worth seventy-five cents a pound in famished Dawson. That's the saving you've effected, a loss of four hundred and forty-nine dollars and seventy cents."

"Yes, and mebbe before we git to Dawson City, them four shells'll be worth a stunnin' sight more'n four hundred and forty-nine dollars and seventy cents," countered Bassett. "They's two things a man in the wilderness should never travel without: a reserve of ammunition and a watertight box of matches. That's gen'rul principles, Eric. I've got 'em both. We might make ninety-nine journeys and never need them safeguards, but the hundredth journey when we will need 'em is sure to come sometime. Who's to say it ain't comin' this back-trip?"

"How in thunder could it?" Eric scoffed. "On a worth-while bet and guaranteed an open river, I'd go from here to Dawson without a match or shell. It's only the beginning of October. It's not cold enough yet to freeze a man, and we could eat raw meat if we had to. Also supposing the freeze-up came right now, we'd make the Yukon River and Stewart Post before the waterway closed. So how could the hundredth chance come this back-trip?"

"I dunno how," responded Bassett doggedly. "I only know it could. But thar's no use in arguin' things that'll likely never

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happen. We better 'tend to our bag. You haul down what's on the ridge and hillside, Eric, while I gather the ones in the valley-bottom."

THE two men separated, Sark striding along the top of the bench-ground to reach the ridge, and Bassett descending into the gut of the valley. Drawing the forelegs of the dead animals up alongside their antlers and lashing them there with a twist of rope, the partners slid the carcasses along with ease to a level spot at the foot of the bench-ground.

"Thirty!" Bassett totaled when all were gathered. "Not bad shootin', Eric, seein' that arter the first two shots they was all on the rampin' run! Not bad shootin' at all, and most of it at a good long range! Must be eight hundred yard to the top of the ridge, eh?"

"Must be, Tom, and a little over! Some shooting, alright, from one hundred yards up to eight hundred, and picking the bucks out of the rout. How many does do you see?"

"Two," Bassett counted, tapping the slim horns of the females with his toe, "and I blundered into 'em both. I knowed they was does when they fell. You're a better shot than I am, pardner. If I'd 'a' had your eye back thar, we'd 'a' had a clean kill of thirty bucks!"

"Never mind, Tom, it's good enough. This isn't like a place where the game's liable to run short. How much do you think they'll weigh?"

Bassett eyed the bag critically, walking around and around each carcass, estimating the length, breadth and depth of the animals, toeing the bodies, and speculatively hefting a leg here and there.

"They'll average over four hundred pound apiece as they lie," he calculated. "They'll dress over three hundred, and what with shrinkage and dryin' out, we'll have ten thousand pound of meat in Dawson City before the middle of the month. You see when we git thar how far my figgers are out."

"They won't be far out," decided Sark. "This is a big lot, Tom, and an even lot. Caution how even they run!"

"They mostly all run even in the Fall, Eric, when they flesh up and fill out arter their scraggy Summer, and the long Winter hair comin' in makes 'em look all the bulkier and han'somer. It's a fine lot, you betcher. Five tons thar'll be laid down on Dawson wharf. Five tons at seventy-five cents a pound gives a total of seven thousand, five hundred dollars. Not a bad return for one day's hunt, pardner!"

"We played in luck, Tom, and we did well to wait and flank the bunch across from the White River till we had them headed. If we'd have let into the outside stragglers any of the times we were tempted to, we wouldn't have bagged over half-a-dozen. But here's thirty, the pick of the White River herd, waiting to be dressed. It'll be some trick to dress that many before dark. Don't you think we'd better start?"

"On the minnit!" agreed Bassett. "But first we'll have to touch up our knives for the bizness. Gimme that stone you pack, pardner!"

SARK produced the stone, but hardly had the steel begun to ring upon it when a shout resounded on the bench-ground above. The men looked swiftly up to see three figures brandishing rifles, and indulging in many contortions as they rushed down the slope.

"Some more Nimrods!" commented Sark staring. "Disappointed Nimrods, by the style of them! Yes and wrathy Nimrods by the way they howl and shake their fists! They've evidently missed the caribou herd and it seems to bother them some."

"They run familiar, they act familiar, and they shout familiar," Bassett observed. "I oughta know—by thunder, I do know! If that ain't Casino Charlie, Ante Baker, and Gunboat Kane, I'll be drawed and quartered with them caribou!"

Sark got up off the boulder he was sitting on to get a better look.

"You escape dismemberment, Tom," he smiled, reseating himself. "It's Casino and Company, sure enough."

For in the lead it was impossible to mistake the swarthy-skinned, chisel-featured Casino, and behind the hulking form of Gunboat and the shrewd gambler's countenance of Ante. Keyed to the top pitch of excitement all three seemed, and wrapped in righteous indignation.

"You mud-wallowin' game-hogs!" Casino bellowed, while he was yet fifty yards away.

"Game-hogs!" echoed Bassett mildly and waited till the trio panted up. "You're

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certainly laborin' under a hallucination, Casino. Accordin' to hand-count that herd contained one million three hundred and thirty-three. We've killed thirty. That's a pretty small percentage if you figger it out, ain't it? Consider the number we let go. Why, if Eric and me had 'a' only liked we'd 'a' downed the million and thar'd 'a' bin but three hundred and thirty-three escaped. And don't you spring any game-law guff on us, either. We got legal license, market-hunters' permits and all that."

"Plagiarizin' poachers, then!" spluttered Casino whom Bassett's guying only lashed into greater frenzy. "You're on my huntin' ground. You had no right to come trespassin' up here."

"Oh! We hadn't, hadn't we? When'd you buy all this Donjek country, Casino?"

"Never you mind. I've bought Hartford's Kluane tradin'-post. You knew that. You knew I was runnin' it now."

"Course we did, but what's the post got to do with it?"

"Them caribou belongs to Kluane Post."

"Pet caribou, eh?" chuckled Sark.

"No they ain't either," put in Gunboat Kane, "but the Kluane Post always claims a killin' of them."

"Always," corroborated Casino, "from time immemorial! That's what keeps it up in Winter, caribou venison. It's too far isolated to get much supplies. It's got to depend on the caribou. Now you greedy geezers come up and plan to starve me out."

"Yes, we're lyin' over the Donjek waitin' for the herd to swim it, and you butt in and head it before it has a chance to swim," declaimed Ante Baker.

"Well, if we'd been lying like chechako on the far side of the Donjek, and you had been hiding like wise guys on the near side, we'd have never said a word," Sark declared. "Never a whisper, would we, Tom?"

"No sir, never a harsh, unspoken thought," supported Tom. "We'd 'a' come over, looked at your kill, said: 'Good bag, boys; good luck for the raftin'-down,' and piked for Dawson. We're dead-game sports, Casino, and deepest disappointment don't frazzle us no more'n succulent success. But you ain't no sport of any kind, let alone a dead-game one, and when the turn of fortune fleeces you, you sure kin't contain yourself for spleen."

"It ain't a question of bein' a sport at all," Casino vehemently exposited. "It's a matter of bein' starved out. I got the trade of one hundred Indians promised, and I got five teams of dogs I bought from them for freightin' fur. I got to be sure of grub right now to ration them one hundred Indians or I got to shift them mighty pronto to some other trader and lose all their trade. More than that, whether I shift or not, I got to feed them twenty-five huskies all Winter. Ante and Gunboat and me ain't laid up any fish for them. We reckoned on the caribou."

"Then for your sodden, selfish sakes, go out and get caribou!" advised Sark, who was beginning to lose his temper. "You'd think this Donjek district was your special preserve, and that you had a lien on all the game it holds. You don't seem to realize that this White-River herd of caribou we've just lit into, ranges over thousands of square miles. Tom and I followed it all the way from the White ourselves, and we saw lots of straggling bands that haven't crossed the Donjek yet. So go after them, I say, or go after one of the other two big herds of the Yukon territory. Go after the Peel River herd or the Pelly River herd. They're both of them bigger than the White River herd, and you can kill more meat across the Yukon River than you can sled back to Kluane Post in a Winter of seven months."

"Huh!" derided Casino. "Where'll a man find small herds in this country after the stampede you started in the big herd? This very minute they're sweepin' and scorin' the land like a mile-wide forest fire. They'll never stop in leagues and leagues. They'll swing north to swim the Donjek now, scud up past Wellesley Lake, cross the Donjek River about where the Nisling branches and follow up the valley of the Nisling clean down into the Aishihik country.

"Go after them? I might find them down in British Columbia, and to go after the Peel River and Pelly River herds is just about as far. No sir, I get my meat right here. Although we didn't fire a shot, Ante and Gunboat and me's just as much entitled to them caribou as you and Bassett is. We had the herd scouted out and marked down as they advanced, and they was our kill by rights when you fellows butted in and chased them off. Now you got to share with us and share alike, just as if we'd all shot into the bunch together.

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There's thirty caribou and five men. That's six apiece."

"Thunderation!" exploded Sark. He sprang up swiftly and confronted Casino. "Your gall isn't colossal, Casino. It's gargantuan. You proceed to divide our spoils, don't you, twelve to us and eighteen to yourself. Eighteen caribou that you never sighted hide or hair of till you saw them lying dead to our rifles.

"The nerve of you is enough to stagger a man. If you'd have come to us peaceably, stated what a hole you were in and asked us decently for some meat to tide you over till you could locate more game, we'd have given you one or two, or maybe half-a-dozen carcasses. But now neither you nor your dogs'll get a pound of caribou, a useless, elongated entrail, a single, wafted smell!"

"Oh we won't, eh?" gritted Casino, the light of wicked determination on his dark face. "Well, if you ain't sharin', we simply got to appropriate. Ante, Gunboat, lay hold with me here!"

Casino seized upon the broad antlers of the nearest buck, but even as he touched it, the thrust of Sark's powerful hand upon his breast sent him staggering back for the space of forty feet.

"Tom, give me two of those four shells you have left!" Eric requested tersely.

Bassett slipped him the two cartridges, shoving the remaining two into his own rifle.

WHEN Casino straightened up he realized that the partners had the jump on him. Sark's leveled weapon dominated his movements, while Bassett held the same domination over Ante and Gunboat.

"Don't you raise your guns an inch," Sark warned. "Tom and I have only four shells left, and we sure won't waste one of them. Partner, you go forward and empty their firearms!"

Bassett stepped up to the three, gathered their weapons and began to empty them.

"Keep the shells," Sark cautioned.

"No use to us, Eric! They's different caliber!"

"The dickens! Drop them on the ground then. It wouldn't do for us to steal any of their rifles. A rifle is the staff of life up in this country. Now, you brazen beggars, face about and walk over that bench-ground!"

Guarded by Sark and prodded on by the butts of their own rifles held in the hands of Bassett, Casino, Ante and Gunboat were marched over the bench-ground and started down to the river bank. When they reached it Bassett slid their empty weapons after them down the slope.

"Hit it up the Kluane," Sark commanded. "Don't poke visage into this valley again, or sure as we dropped those caribou we'll do the same to you."

"All right," snarled Casino, making ominous gestures in the distance, "we're goin' up the Kluane. We're goin' back to the post. Don't you worry about droppin' us. You won't get the chance. We won't trouble you in that valley. Yet all the same I give you warnin' that you ain't seen the last of this deal. There's more ways than one of takin' my legitimate share of the spoils. As sure as I stand on the Donjek's shore, I'll take that share, and as sure as you fellows killed them caribou, you'll never get to Dawson City with the meat!"

Still talking in pantomime when he was out of hearing, Casino led Ante and Gunboat along the Donjek bank, crossed at the Kluane's mouth, and disappeared up it in the direction of his trading-post.

Sark watched him till he was out of sight and then turned apologetically to his comrade.

"Tom, I got to confess I was hasty-minded when I wanted to shoot off those last four cartridges. Hereafter I stand firm for your general principles. The hundredth possibility swooped on us mighty sudden, didn't it? We sure needed those shells this fighting minute."

"Yes, and we'll mebbe need 'em worse before we git to Dawson," grinned Bassett. "I never in my life seen Casino so riled. He's fair rampagin'. And no wonder, with the prospeck of a meatless Winter ahead of him. He rashly reasons it's our fault, and he vows he'll take it out of us. We gotta keep our eyes peeled, pardner. We're in a bad hole. It's a long, long way to Dawson City. The quicker we git started the better, or Casino'll spring some stunt that'll never let us start. Come on and dress deer faster'n you ever dressed deer in your life, Eric, and set the dryin'-frames down the valley a bit out of range of the bench-ground. Casino might even try to pot us from thar."

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CASINO'S assertion that he would not trouble them in the valley, Sark and Bassett had accepted as supremest guile. They expected him to strike in the dark, delivering a blow in some devious way, and it puzzled them as time went by and the looked-for blow did not fall.

They were not drying the caribou meat in strips after the Summer fashion. They had not the leisure for that, and the October weather was cold enough to ensure the keeping of the meat in bulk. So they simply quartered the thirty carcasses, hung the quarters on the drying-frames and smoked them a little on the outside to harden a film against the disintegrating effect of the air. When this process was finished, they packed the quarters over the bench-ground to the Donjek River's edge, and proceeded to build a raft to float the meat down to Dawson.

It was while chopping the spruce logs for the raft that Tom made the discovery that they had been watched during their several days of meat-curing by Casino or one of his allies. Sark, who was spiking the raft together in the shallow water, heard him calling, so he threw down his ax and went up the slope of the bank. In a clump of spruce upon the top of the bench-land, Tom was scraping up the mold under a tree.

"Look at that!" he requested.

Sark gazed keenly at the mold Bassett had scraped together. It was covered with burnt matches and tobacco-scrapings from a foul pipe.

"Thunder, there's been some smoking going on here, Tom!" Eric deduced. "Somebody lying here smoking for a number of days, doing nothing else but smoking, it seems!"

"And incidentally keepin' watch, pardner! That means Casino told the truth when he said he wouldn't bother us in the valley. But he wants to know when we leave the valley for the river. It's on the river he intends to git us. Now how in the crust of creation is he goin' to do it?"

"You've flabbergasted me, Tom. Only Casino knows, and he won't tell. But if it's at the moment of embarkation he figures to stop us he'd better be making his try. I got the bottom logs of the raft spiked together already, and I can finish the top as fast as you roll them down. So go to it, and we'll throw on the meat and be away before Casino knows where he's at."

Swiftly the raft was rushed to completion. Green boughs were laid upon it, the five tons of meat laid upon the boughs, with another layer of green over all. As well as being fitted with a pair of sweeps, the raft carried a couple of long poles for poling where the nature of the river rendered it necessary, and, thus equipped for all emergencies, Sark and Bassett pushed clear of the bank and swung down the Donjek.

But immediately as they spun off they saw the form of Ante Baker step out of the trees on the farther shore and signal to somebody up-river.

"Spotted!" growled Bassett in chagrin. "The swine took to the farder bank when we moved out of the valley onto this one. He's wig-wagged Casino, I'll betcher. Yes, thar comes Casino on the gallop, and Gunboat too. What's the commotion they got with 'em?"

"Dogs!" announced Sark, standing up to see over the water. "Dogs on ropes. All the dogs he has, I guess. Twenty-five, he said. Tom, as sure as we're afloat, he's going to bloodhound us!"

For Casino's actions left no doubt upon his intentions. Whipping before them the twenty-five huskies held on long leashes, he and Gunboat raced down the bank which Sark and Bassett had just left. They struck the spot where the caribou quarters had been piled before being loaded. Twenty-five pointed noses sniffed the tantalizing scent, and twenty-five savage throats howled their primitive hunger.

Casino and Gunboat slipped the leashes, and the whole pack loped rapidly down the shore, throwing their heads in air and crinkling their manes as the smell of the floating cargo drifted to them. They kept pace with the raft, and their snarling yelps rang across the water, full of challenge and foreboding for Sark and Bassett.

"Eric," observed Bassett solemnly, "those huskies are yelling hungry. Casino hasn't fed them a scrap all the days we been 'tending to our meat. And if they're hungry now, you can imagine what they'll be by the time we make Dawson City. Isn't Casino an imp of invention? He found out we had only four shells left. He knew those four shells would stop three men, and he likewise knew the four shells wouldn't stop twenty-five huskies.

Isn't he an imp of invention, I say? By thunder, pardner, we're in a worse hole

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than we were in back in the valley! We certainly got our work cut out for us! It'll be an amazing miracle if we ever make the shelter of Stewart Post, but we'll stave off the day of disaster as long as possible. You steer this raft plumb in the middle of the river, and I'll help the current all I can."

THE Donjek's current ran about eight miles an hour. With the added impetus of a hard-worked sweep, Bassett stretched the rate to ten miles an hour, and in spite of the handicap of shoal and broken water they maintained that speed till dark through the tortuous river-miles to the junction of the Donjek and the Nisling. All the way down they were persistently escorted by the howling huskies, whose bold intent became plainer with every traversed mile.

On every jutting headland, on every bar that tongued out into the water the wolf-dogs bunched to menace Sark and Bassett, and at the narrow, rocky, island-channeled places they spurted ahead and ringed the rocks, awaiting a chance to snatch at the cargo on the raft as it floated by.

Several times in such channels on the way down to the mouth of the Nisling, Sark had to leave the steering-sweep and jump for his rifle. At first the huskies fled into the spruce-forested shores at the mere lifting of the weapon, but soon, when no report or bullet followed such demonstration, they began to fathom the bluff and simply scattered along the river's brink when Eric leveled his Winchester, making dodging leaps from side to side, whirling half air-springs, and clicking bared fangs in impotent rage.

And when the raft grounded, as it often did, on sunken bars, the dogs surrounded it in the shallow water, closing in with remarkable determination, and only being beaten off by indiscriminate cudgeling with the long poles which the partners were using to clear the craft.

"Heaven help us, Tom, if we ever get hung up hard and fast on a shoal!" breathed Eric, as they cleared just such a bar and stopped just such an attack a mile above the Nisling's mouth. "Why, these dogs aren't half-wolves at all. They're whole wolves—plumb, pure, one hundred per cent. wolves, littered in the wild."

"Wolves!" Bassett brooded. "I jist wisht they was wolves. Then a gun and a bit of fire would keep 'em off. But these scoundrelly curs are ten times worse'n plain wolves. They's every bit as savage and evil, and they have a staggerin' sight more brains. They've bin eddicated by the white man, Eric, and they's turnin' the white man's wisdom back on us and usin' it aginst us every mile we drift. They sure know as much as Casino, their malicious master, and that's sayin' somethin'.

"I'll betcher a hundred ounces of the very best gold that they figgered out long ago that we was shy of shells. They don't dread our rifles now any more'n a couple of willer gads. If they start comin' for us, a paltry four shots won't scare 'em off, and if we git hung up hard and fast as you say, the poles won't stop 'em, either. That probability's before us, pardner, and not so far before us, if you pause to mentally measure. I'm thinkin' of Lussiar Bar down near the mouth of the White!"

"Lussiar Bar's a bad place for a raft with five tons on it," admitted Sark, "but we're not there yet, and I'm not going to begin worrying about it till we get there. What worries me now is where we're going to camp without losing our meat or getting ourselves chewed to pieces."

"Try the Donjek's left limit," Tom suggested. "Mebbe the dogs'll stay on the right."

SARK steered the raft across to the west bank, but the moment the huskies saw it crossing, they yelped a protest, dashed back along the east bank, swam a narrow spot, and were sitting waiting open-mouthed in a dripping half-circle when the partners' raft floated in to the bank.

"Git to thunder outa here!" shouted Bassett leveling his rifle, but they only began to shift and snarl and snap, all the while holding their line unbroken at the water's edge.

Tom dropped the rifle and poised his heavy spruce pole. It descended straight at the head of the nearest dog, yet it never reached that dog. With the swiftness of a spring in recoil the husky leaped aside. The pole banged the rocks where it had been sitting. Again the husky leaped, seizing the pole with its strong jaws and worrying it almost out of Bassett's hands before it could be withdrawn. A second, a third, a fourth time Tom struck, and the fourth time he all but lost the pole.

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"Tarnation, that ain't doin!" he exclaimed. "We need both poles, and I kin't afford to lose one; for by the look of things I'll never git ashore to cut another."

"By thunder, you take the four shells, Tom, and decimate four of the beggars!" Sark urged. "I'll slither into the rest with my ax, and you can drop your gun and back me with the second ax."

"No, no, pardner, the odds is too big. It makes a man mad enough to act rash, I know. Still we got to keep cool and save our sanity till we jist have to go insane. It's not logic to try to corner them dogs with the axes. The logic of it is to swing the axes if they corner us."

"Then we don't camp at all tonight?"

"I guess not, Eric. We dassen't land whar they kin git at us, and whar they kin't git at us, over a cliff for instance, we won't be able to land."

"Let's back up to the other shore. I hate to be bluffed by a couple of dozen huskies. Besides, it's turning cold on the water. Right now I can appreciate a fire and a good hot meal."

Accordingly the raft was poled back to the Donjek's right limit, but the huskies were swifter than the poles. When the raft arrived, they were there, sitting open-mouthed in a dripping half-circle, to welcome it.

"The Nisling's left," directed Sark grimly. "We'll see if the skunks stay with it."

While the dark dimmed the forests of spruce upon the shores and gloomed the wide river itself, the partners stemmed the Nisling's current by a great effort and worked up its mouth. They tried to land first upon the left limit there, and then upon the right, yet on both banks the wolfish sentries challenged them and turned them back.

"Wouldn't that puncture you?" fretted Sark. "We've done a slavish hard day's work today and rafted a hundred-odd miles, and still we can't lie down in peace and eat and sleep by our own camp-fire."

"I know, but we got to smile and suffer here, Eric. It's stark suicide to try to fight them dogs with any weapons we got. I thought they was only hungry when they started on our trail, but now I see they's famished. Beyond a doubt Casino hadn't been feedin' 'em anythin' for days before we ran foul of him. Beyond a doubt he was lettin' 'em go hungry till the kill of the caribou, and when we polluted his plans he jist deliberately went on starvin' 'em to hound us. Look at the holler stomachs of 'em, and the ribs in their accordion-plaited sides. We sure got to donate them the land, pardner, and content ourselves with the water. We sure got to go on and drift."

"I hate to do it," chafed Sark, holding the raft stationary against the current by putting his tremendous strength upon his well-placed pole. "Man was certainly ordained, Tom, to dominate beasts, and I tell you I hate to knuckle under to twenty-five mangy-hided mongrels whelped in the tepees of a tribe of dirty Sticks!"

"So do I," sided Bassett. "I hate it like pizen, but you see for yourself it can't be——"

Tom stopped, amazed, for Eric had dropped his pole upon the raft and doubled up as if shot. He was crouching down, knees upon the caribou quarters, tearing at his pack-sack which peeped forth from under the spruce boughs.

"What in thunder's hit you, pardner?" Bassett demanded. "What you arter thar?"

"You named it, Tom," shrieked Sark, frantically ripping things out of the pack-sack. "You named it. And myself floating down a hundred miles like an incessant idiot with it in the bag all the time! Yes, and I'd have floated clean to Dawson City if you hadn't have named it."

"Named it! Named what?"

"Poison! The strychnine dope we put out for those wolves that were plaguing our trap-line over on the Snag River all Fall!"

"Tarnation! Didn't you use it up?"

"Not by a stunning sight! I got half the bottle yet. Here it is, Tom, doom and destruction to those twenty-five yapping beasts. I told you man was made to dominate beasts, and the wherewithal to do it is generally somewhere at hand if you'll only use your brains. Mine quit working until you jogged them. Just watch me break the scent!"

WHILE Bassett poled the drifting raft back to the bank, Sark cut off a piece of caribou meat and poured some strychnine on it. As they neared the open-mouthed half-circle, he cast it down in front. But the starved wolf-dogs did not pounce in a swarm upon it and fight a bloody battle for its possession as Eric ex-

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pected. Instead they circled it, sniffing suspiciously and stopping at intervals to eye the partners as if to fathom the wile.

"Thar's the white man's eddication for you again!" deplored Bassett. "They know that meat's pizened or you wouldn't toss it to 'em arter fightin' 'em off from it all day. You kin pizen pieces till the crack of doom, Eric, and they'll never sink a polished fang in 'em. Look at that brazen Beelzebub of a beast thar, spurnin' your burnt offerin'!"

For a gaunt old lead-dog, with scars on neck and shoulders that advertised innumerable fights, and evil cunning glowing in his satanic eyes, had sniffed the bait to his satisfaction and sidled round with his haunches toward it. Viciously he delivered swift, scratching kicks with his hindlegs, knocking the poisoned meat over the bank into the river.

"You calloused, contemptuous cuss!" anathematized Sark, shaking a vengeful fist at the lead-dog. "I'm sure not going to waste any more of my precious salad on meat for you. I'm going to wait, and when it comes to a show-down, you're the first cantankerous cur I'm going to pink with the first of our four shells. Now put that in your gob and chew it! And when you're dead, my dope'll do the business for the rest. I know a way to make it do it!"

"Well if you do, go on and make it now," his partner urged. "I'll spare you one shell to slay that scornful lead-dog if you guarantee you kin dope the rest."

"No, not yet, Tom," procrastinated Eric. "It's got to come to a show-down first. That's the strategy in the stroke. You'll see when they rush us, that is, if they ever get the chance."

"They'll git it," Tom prophesied. "If they don't jump us on the Donjek, they'll jump us on the White. Leave your pole alone now and stick to your sweep. We'll both have to steer in the dark. All we kin do is keep in the middle and drift. It's day-and-night or Blucher now, Eric, and set your teeth for Waterloo!"

THROUGH the chill October Northland night they drifted on down upon the Donjek's breast. They moved between somber, serried spruce trees ranked on either shore, and starred with the fiery eyes of the huskies, sneaking invisible within the forest's gloom. Under the raft the Donjek slid like rippled quicksilver, while overhead between the black, flanking spruce-tops twisted another shining river, a sky-river, silvered by the aurora's flame and strewn with spawn of stars.

Breathless before transition into Winter, the Autumnal arctic land lay stark and mute. No note of migrant bird or cry of preying beast broke the vast nirvanic calm. Only at intervals upon the winding shores rose the high-pitched, wolfish wail of the huskies voicing their starvation and their primeval wo. Through a world axoic stole the men, borne upon an age-old river running past age-old mountains under age-old stars. And parallel with them, gliding fast or slow as the river flowed, moved the stream of fiery eyes in the dark. Kin to the first hunt-pack roaming the earth were these wild whelps, and their hunting-cry shrilled in the same savage tongue.

On and on to their serenade the partners drifted. At midnight they passed the mouth of Klotassin River and at dawn reached the junction of the Donjek and the White. As the raft swung down the large stream the morning light revealed the hunger-maddened huskies following upon the bank.

"It's night-and-day or Blucher still," concluded Bassett, surveying their gaunt shadowers. "It's keep on driftin'. It's snooze in turns. It's do without a fire, and hack off the half-smoked rind of caribou-meat to eat."

So they steered on.

It was one hundred miles from the junction of the Donjek and the White to the junction of the White and the Yukon. That day they passed the mouth of Katrina River. That night they left behind the mouth of Ladue Creek, and the next dawn saw them approaching Lussiar Bar a few miles above the White River's mouth. From the northern shore the bar stretched out below a jumble of rocks that caught and helped throw down the silt carried by the current. The top of the bar almost touched the surface, and over it poured a shallow sheet of water mired by the volcanic ash deposits which gave the White River its name.

Men in light-draft poling-boats were accustomed to squeeze over the bar, but Sark and Bassett knew that their heavy raft, burdened with its five-ton cargo, was an entirely different proposition from a

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poling-boat. They knew they would stick on the mud, but what they didn't know was just how securely they would stick.

"We got to take it on the rampin' run, Eric," declared Bassett. "With our weight and momentum we kin mebbe scoop out enough mud to slide through. If we don't, we fight it out. That is unless your dope plan goes. If you think you kin put that pizen over on 'em, now's your time!"

"I know it's my time, and I'm going to fool them so fast that they'll never know what hit them till they're all stretched stiff and stark. You 'tend to the steering and just warn me when the rascals come to open spots in the trees. I don't want them to see me at it."

WHILE Bassett kept the raft on its course, Sark pulled out a hindquarter of caribou from under the green boughs and placed it on top. All over the quarter he made cunning incisions with his hunting-knife. Into the incisions he poured strychnine from his bottle and squeezed the cuts together again.

"There, partner," he laughed, "if that isn't an innocent-looking hindquarter of caribou, I'll be dumped and drowned. It'll sure do the business. The wolf-dogs were plumb suspicious of bits thrown to them, but they won't balk at anything they come and steal, and it in untouched, unsuspicious bulk at that! We got to make a shrewd show of fighting them, shoot what we can, work a bluff of ax-carving a few, and take a roost in the trees. They'll feast like conquerors on the first quarter they can get at, and I've left one mighty handy. Savvy, Tom? After a decent interval we'll descend from our roost and bury the dead."

"That's a sudden, salient stunt," applauded Bassett. "I'm believin' you got them devastated, Eric, and Casino coppered for fair. Besides, it ain't goin' to cost us much, jist seventy-five pounds or so of venison worth seventy-five cents a pound. One quarter to turn the trick, and they'll be runnin' a spirit-pack in spirit-land before they can bolt a second helpin'. So if you're all ready, we better start to put on speed from here. Lussiar Bar ain't very far down."

"All right," Sark agreed, "spurt ahead, but keep in close to the shore. That'll give the brutes a good chance to surround us and also give us a good chance to swing into the trees. The spruce branches lean pretty low over the water just there."

The wolf-dogs upon the bank had loped ahead and bunched at Lussiar Bar. It seemed as if their savage reason told them that here was an obstacle that the raft could not overpass, and that here they could seize the meat for which their hunger-griped stomachs lusted. They crowded out with grim intent, howling defiance to the rushing river and to the speeding raft.

Sark and Bassett were throwing all their strength upon their poles. The raft surged and wallowed under the impetus of their strokes, and just as they put in the final thrust before reaching the bar, the partners leaped back upon the extreme rear edge of the logs. This action together with the momentum of the raft tilted the front edge up so that it rode half-way over the bar before sticking, and immediately it stuck, Tom and Eric leaped to the forward end and poled like maniacs in the hope that the lightening of the rear would give it freeway enough to draw over. But the water was too shallow, and the weight too great. Lussiar gripped them tight with its muggy jaws, and through the shallow river charged the determined dogs.

"The guns, Eric, the guns!" yelled Bassett, dropping his pole and grabbing his Winchester.

"Sure," panted Sark following suit, "and leave the old lead-dog to me!"

The old lead-dog, his mane standing, his gleaming fangs bared, was snarling and leaping in the van, and Sark sighted squarely on the scarred chest. As he pulled trigger, the husky stopped in mid-leap, somersaulted in air, fell with a splash, and was swept away by the current. Bassett dropped the dog behind the lead-dog. Sark accounted for the third, and Tom fired the last shell through the fourth.

They threw down the rifles and, catching up their axes, sprang out into the shallow water of the bar to break through the oncoming rush of dogs. Sark struck at the foremost, but it shied aside, and Eric's ax sank helve-deep in the muck. He had no time to jerk it out, for another husky landed upon his back, and he was forced to throw up swift hands and tear the beast off by the hind-legs before it could rip open his neck.

A third animal slashed at his knees, but Sark jumped over it as it struck and reached

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for the low-hanging spruce limbs. Grasping a stout one, he swung his feet over it and heaved his body up.

Bassett had likewise lost his ax, and he was right after his partner into the branches, clearing the pack by a narrow margin and shaking off in mid-air one vicious mongrel with its teeth sunk fast in his moccasin.

"Thunderation, but they's wild!" breathed Tom, as both men climbed back to the crotches of the limbs for greater safety.

"They'll be tamer in a little," chuckled Eric. "Look at them race for the meat!"

FOR the wolf-dogs, seeing that the men were securely treed, had dashed pell-mell for the half-submerged raft. Howling demoniacally and fighting as they went for who should have the honor of the first mouthful, they splashed through the water of the bar.

One lean, swift cur gained a few jumps on the rest. He sprang in triumph onto the raft, but as he landed, a rifle cracked up-river, and the husky went off as quickly as he had leaped on. And hard on the report, before Sark's and Bassett's astonished eyes a poling-boat drove down like an apparition beside the raft.

Out of the poling-boat and on to the raft jumped Casino, Ante and Gunboat, staving off the wolf-dogs' savage charge. Casino had a rifle in his hands, but Ante and Gunboat wielded heavy dog-whips, with which they rained terrific blows. In one second the odds were changed. Twenty-five huskies against two men with only four shells was a different argument from twenty huskies against three men with unlimited ammunition and flaying dog-whips.

Casino simply rattled in the shots. He did not want to kill any more useful dogs, but he dazed and staggered them with the stunning impacts of bullets on the water round their heads, and smothered and blinded them with the geysers of muck which his missiles cast up as they bored through the water and struck the bar beneath. And, cracking without cessation, flailed the whips of Ante and Gunboat.

The whip was the sign of mastery, and well the wielders understood the science of the cut. Under the lash the dazed, staggered, smothered, blinded huskies could do nothing but cringe and scatter, and flee for the shore where they stood wailing out their supplications and licking their wounds.

"Now get her off quick, boys," commanded Casino, standing guard.

"Hold on thar, you fellers," shouted Bassett, starting to descend from his perch in the spruce. "Sark and I kin lever that raft off ourselves."

"We can do it better," Casino shouted back. "You stay where you are."

"Oh, no, I think we'd better come and help you, Casino!"

"You stay where you are, I say!"

Bassett went on clambering off the spruce limb on to the trunk. Casino raised his rifle, and the ball whacked into the trunk just under Tom's lowering legs.

With a loud malediction Tom hastily drew up the legs.

"That's right," commended Casino. "You put them down again and I'll amputate them. Hurry up, boys," exhorting the hard-laboring Ante and Gunboat, "wiggle her off."

Ante and Gunboat, using the sweeps of the raft as shovels, had already gouged out a pathway through the bar in front. Then with the spruce poles thrust under the rear logs, after the manner of crowbars, they heaved up to start it. As they raised, the water boiled up underneath, lending them the aid of the current's force, and the raft ploughed ahead a few feet before it stuck. Three times it pulled and hung, but the fourth time it floated free. Ante and Gunboat hopped upon it with the long poles. Casino, making sure that the painter of the poling-boat was fast to the raft, tumbled after them and ironically waved Sark and Bassett goodby.

"Told you there were more ways than one!" he taunted. "Told you I'd have my share. Since you didn't divvy up, I take two shares. So-long, boys. When you get to Dawson, this cargo'll be all sold, and the caribou steak in the pan."

He waved anew, with ostentation and contumely, and sat down to the work of steering with the stern-sweep.

"Stop him, Tom," yelled Sark, who was farther into the spruce than Bassett, and consequently farther from the water. "Stop him sudden! Don't let him go off with that poisoned quarter!"

"Tarnation, Eric! In the excitement I'd clean forgotten that quarter. Hey you, Casino! I say, Casino! Turn and listen! That top quarter—pizened—strychnine! Savvy? Doped for the dogs. Throw it off."

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But the swift current had already carried the raft a considerable distance down. What with the noise of the river's flow and the working of his sweep, and Ante's and Gunboat's poles, Casino could not rightly interpret Bassett's shouts. He thought Tom was imploring him to throw off and leave them part of the cargo, so he only shook a derisive head and waved additional good-by as he steered round a bend.

"The thick-headed thief!" exclaimed Bassett. "Now they's gone with that doctored quarter, and if they ever stop to roast a meal of it, they's three dead men!"

"They won't stop, partner. Casino'll be afraid of us getting a boat and catching up. He'll never halt this side of Dawson City."

"Then if he gits thar before us it'll not be a crime we'll have on our hands, Eric. It'll be a massacre, and Dawson City'll be a clammy cemetery. Come on. We gotta run for Stewart Post, and we kin't make it any too quick."

HASTILY they climbed down out of the spruce trees. The twenty huskies were still on the shore, too cowed and dispirited to trail the raft or to offer violence to them, so Tom and Eric struck off into an easy, lurching run for the White River's mouth. It was between two and three miles to its junction with the Yukon, and ten more from there to Stewart Post, and the sun had circled round to high noon before the partners arrived. After them into the post crept the bleeding, bedraggled wolf-dogs, who had trailed them at a respectful distance all the way.

"Spificated spooks!" ejaculated Lordeil, the Stewart trader, as he watched the partners pound in. "What's happened you men? What's happened your dogs?"

"They're not our dogs," Sark told him. "They're Casino's. You 'tend to them and charge him well for their attention and keep, when he comes to collect them. You saw him go by, I suppose?"

"Yes, some hours ago, him and Ante Baker and Gunboat Kane on a raft. Loaded down with caribou quarters they were, and poling every minute as if the meat would spoil."

"It was our raft, Lordeil, and our venison. We're going after it if you can lend us a boat."

"Yours?" Lordeil stared his comical surprise. "Sure I can lend you a boat if that's the play. I'll lend you anything I have. But how on earth did Casino pilfer it?"

While Lordeil led them down to the boat at the Yukon's edge, Sark rapidly explained the situation.

"You see we got to get him," he finished, "or he'll sell that meat broadcast and poison the eaters wholesale."

"Shades of Skookum Charlie!" exploded Lordeil. "You got to put on steam then. This boat I'm lending you's no speeder, and it's the only one left. The rest are all up the Stewart freighting prospectors' supplies for the Winter. This one's a tub, men, and I sure apologize for its lines, but it's the best I can do."

"It'll answer," blurted Bassett, eying the unwieldy thing. "It's gotta answer. If we couldn't git anythin' else, we'd straddle and paddle a log. Heave her out, pardner. And Lordeil, jist throw us an extra pair of oars for fear we have a break."

In another moment they were off.

THE boat proved more unwieldy than it looked. It was rotten and waterlogged, as well as awkward, but it had two sets of oar-locks, and both the partners could row at once. So they put their backs into the pull and shot downstream. It was seventy miles from Stewart to Dawson, and for upwards of ten hours they rowed almost without pause.

As they went by, they hailed the trading-posts at Sixtymile River, Indian River and Ainslee's from the water, demanding news of Casino. At Sixtymile he was two hours ahead. At Indian River he was but one hour ahead, and at Ainslee's he was but a few miles to the good, but after that the dark came down, and the partners could not see whether they were overtaking Casino or not.

They rowed on and on, past the mouths of Caribou Creek and Baker Creek, hoping all the while to hear ahead of them the toiling of the sweeps or the plunging of the poles. Yet listen as they might, no sound drifted to them up the breast of the Yukon, and it was not till they slid across the Klondike River's mouth and bumped into the Dawson landing that they sighted the raft.

There it lay, together with Casino's poling-boat, tied to the end of the pier, empty and deserted, with the green spruce-boughs which had covered the meat scattered all about.

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"She's gone, Eric," gasped Bassett, his great chest heaving from ten hours' continuous labor at the oars. "I'll betcher that top quarter's already reposin' in a rabble of distended stomachs, and before midnight Dawson City'll be a city of silent dead. For the health of humanity, Eric, git your rusty-hinged legs workin' and search the restaurants from the water-front up. Casino'll likely 'a' sold to 'em. Find him, and you find the meat. And fly a flag in the street whar he is. I'll see you. I'll be comin' a-runnin' with Doc Martin."

Sark dived for the nearest restaurant. Bassett rushed several blocks up Main Street to Doc. Martin's office. He banged open the door with such force that Martin's feet came off his desk to the floor with a jolt. The doctor, his round fat face puckered with amazement, stared through a haze of cigar-smoke at Tom's dilapidated figure.

"Bassett, what in——"

"You got a stomach-pump, Doc.?"

"Sure, the only one in Dawson, and I'm proud of it. Why?"

"Sell it to me."

"I won't. I tell you it's the only one in Dawson."

"That's why I want it. Sell it to me quick."

"Not on your life, Tom. I need it in my business."

"I'll give it back to you tomorrow, Doc. Yes, I'll give it back to you in half-an-hour."

"Tom!" Martin took his cigar out of his mouth and gazed solicitously at Bassett. "You've evidently been enduring privation and hardship galore. Has it left you a trifle batty?"

"I'm wise as Socrates and then some brain," avowed Tom. "I'll give you one hundred dollars for that stomach-pump this minnit and hand you back the same pump for nothin' when I'm done."

"Oh, well, Tom, if you really need somebody to take your superfluous coin away I'm the man with license to do it!" observed Martin whimsically. "Here's your pump. Fork over the hundred."

Bassett made the exchange with alacrity.

"Now come on with me," he begged hurriedly. "I dunno whether I'll be too late to use that pump or not, but I need its moral suasion. Also I need the moral support of your presence, Doc. And if you want to live out your threescore years and ten, don't you dare so much as snicker when the critical moment comes. It's Casino that Sark and me's up aginst. He's double-crossed us dastardly, and I'm goin' to square off with him or bury him deeply down."

AS HE hauled Doc Martin downstreet by the arm, Bassett explained the manner of Casino's double-cross, and he had barely got through explaining when he sighted Sark head of him. Eric was standing in the middle of the street in front of Cuvine's restaurant, flagging his partner with a wildly-waved mackinaw coat.

"All right, Eric, we're here!" panted Tom. "You kin dress yourself and lead on. Whar is he?"

"In Cuvine's. I struck Cuvine outside here, and he's weighed and bought Casino's whole cargo. It's back in his shed behind there. Some of it's cut up already. It's going to be served on his tables tonight, and the first steak's frying for Casino now."

"In the shed, you say, pardner? By thunder, hustle! If they've struck that doped quarter first——"

The catastrophe was too awful to contemplate, and Tom failed to describe it. With Sark and Doc Martin he ran into the shed where burned an oil lamp in a bracket on the wall, and where the caribou quarters lay in a pile like cord-wood. The forequarters Bassett disregarded. His interest rested in the hindquarters, and he kneeled beside them, pawing them over, examining them for incisions. Suddenly he gave a sharp exclamation, succeeded by a sigh of relief.

"It's here," he gulped, tapping the bottommost quarter of the end row. "I see your knife-cuts, Eric."

"Thank Heaven!" breathed Sark devoutly, sitting down weakly upon the meat and mopping his forehead while he watched Tom and Doc. Martin shift the quarters and extricate the poisoned one. "Thank Heaven, Tom! That's a mill-stone off my neck. It's worth the loss of five tons of meat just to have an innocent, relieved mind."

"Loss!" snapped Bassett. "Do you think we're goin' to lose that meat?"

"We have lost it, partner. It's sold and paid for. Cuvine told me so. How you going to get it back?"

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"I don't want it back, but I'll sure have the returns for it."

"Then you'll have to hold Casino up. And that's against our principles, Tom. Remember we always been law-abiding men."

"I know, but Casino'll cough up all the same or die an agonized death. He'll be eatin' that steak that was fryin' now. Come on inside."

Slipping the poisoned quarter to one side behind some wood where no one would blunder on it, the three men left the shed and stalked into the restaurant itself. At a long table in the center of the room, and facing the door, sat Casino, Ante and Gunboat. Ante and Gunboat were gossiping idly, elbows upon the table, waiting to be served.

Casino was already busy with knife and fork upon a plateful of fried caribou meat. In the act of forking a huge morsel into his mouth he caught sight of Sark and Bassett entering with Doc. Martin. He paused, lowered the forkful of meat and burst into a great laugh that resounded throughout the restaurant, and attracted everybody's attention.

"Haw! Haw!" he roared. "How do, Tom, How do, Eric! Made a good run for it, I see. But you're too late, boys. The meat's all sold, ten thousand one hundred and five pounds of it at seventy-five cents a pound. Seven thousand five hundred and seventy-eight dollars and seventy-five cents in my pocket, and you'll never see a battered cent of it.

"I told you up the Donjek how it would end, and I told you up the White that the steak would be fryin' in the pan when you come. A good job, too, boys, from the appearance of you. You certainly look cannibal hungry. So sit in and devour all you want. The supper's on me. Sit in, I say. Don't be backward. I'm payin', and there's no meat walkin' that can equal prime, fat caribou venison in October. This is the juiciest cut of the bunch I'm eatin' right——"

"CASINO!" Bassett, his face fixed in a horrified expression, dashed forward in interruption. "Casino, you ain't meanin' to tell us you're eatin' that meat you rafted down?"

"Of course," replied Casino, staring astonished at the unmitigated horror in Bassett's face. "It's excellent meat, too. Best I ever tasted. Rollin' fat, and the gravy's golden brown. What's flabbergastin' you so?"

Bassett cast a wild appealing eye upon Ante and Gunboat.

"You boys eaten any yet?"

"No, not yet," they smirked, "but we will in a minute. Ours is cookin' on the stove."

"Don't you do it!" Tom warned dramatically. "Don't you chew one shred or speck. Somebody stop the cookin'! Somebody stop the cuttin'!" He turned again to Casino. "Anybody but you eaten any yet?" he demanded.

"No," Casino replied. "First order, first served, ain't it? And since I brought it in myself, nobody could beat me to it, could they? What's bitin' you?"

"Casino," Bassett solemnly responded, "I'm hopin'. I'm sure hopin' tremendously. I'm hopin' you kin give me the answer I want to the question I'm askin'. Did that cut you're eatin' come off a fore or hindquarter?"

"Hindquarter!"

"Oh, great Sachems!" Tom flung a tortured glance over his shoulder at Sark and Doc Martin, snapped the fingers of one hand helplessly in the air and gave a despairing stamp. "Hindquarter! Listen to that, Eric! Listen to that, Doc! But we might have 'a' known without askin'. For retribution always overtakes the pillager and the thief. Casino, I sure hate to rattle your death-warrant in your ears, but one of them hindquarters of caribou was pizened."

"Poisoned!" gasped Casino. He dropped his knife and fork and shot himself back from the table with a jerk that overturned the bench upon which he had been sitting. His swarthy face paled as he felt a hush descend over the restaurant, and saw the waiters and customers tip-toeing up in a circle. "Poisoned!" he quavered. "W-what you mean? W-what kind of poison?"

"Strychnine!" whispered Bassett hoarsely. "Them dogs had us plumb cornered. We didn't know how to git away from 'em till Eric found some dope that we'd used on wolves in his pack-sack. So we loaded one quarter with it and put it on top for the dogs to chew when we stuck on Lussiar Bar, but you come along and took it before they could touch it, and when I yelled to you,

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you didn't seem to understand. Then we got a boat at Stewart and made a race to catch you, but you had too much start. I expected all Dawson City'd be dead when I got here, but now I find you're the only man that's eaten. Casino, I don't want to make it too hard for you, but we discovered that Cuvine had bought the cargo, and we went lookin' in his shed. We went lookin', you understand, and I don't want to make it too hard for you, but——"

"My grave!" groaned Casino.

HE PUT one hand to his stomach, staggered a yard or so, caught his feet upon the overturned bench and fell flat on his back. There he began to violently twist and writhe and beat a tattoo with his heels upon the floor.

"Doc—save me!" he beseeched. "I feel it takin' hold. Doc, give me brine or soapsuds or something!"

"They're no good, Casino," declared Martin, kneeling beside him and holding his arms from thrashing about. "They wouldn't work on all that meat you've eaten. Why, you must have devoured pounds. No, emetics are no good this trip, I'm sorry to say. The only thing that'll save you is a stomach-pump."

"Go on and pump, then," Casino appealed. "Go on and pump like blazes!"

"I have no pump," Martin confessed.

"What! You a doctor and ain't got no stomach-pump?"

"I sold it to Tom Bassett just a little while ago. He started out to rescue Dawson City with it."

"Tom, Tom!" shrieked Casino. "Loan me that pump. For the love of life, loan me that pump. I'm dyin'. You ain't goin' to stand there and let me die in agony, are you? Tom, you ain't rememberin' old scores at a moment like this?"

"I dunno," returned Bassett guardedly. "You didn't make Eric's and my pathway down the Donjek River and the White River any avenue of roses. You didn't seem to care whether we died in agony from the fangs of huskies or not. So I'm not bound to show you any more consideration. I'm not bound to hand you my stomach-pump. It's a valuable pump. I paid Doc a hundred dollars for it."

"I'll buy it," Casino proffered frantically. "I'll give you the hundred dollars. Yes, I'll give you five hundred dollars cash down."

"You'll have to go higher'n that. You hold your life pretty cheap. You'll have to go a lot higher, Casino. In fact, I'll tell you what you'll have to go. That pump at this funereal moment is worth jist seven thousand five hundred and seventy-eight dollars and seventy-five cents!"

"You robber! You usurer! You extortioner! I see your game. You take advantage of my sufferin' to fleece me of all the money Cuvine paid me."

"No, I don't fleece you. You fleeced me, and I'm only takin' back the wool. You pay me seven thousand five hundred and seventy-eight dollars and seventy-five cents for that pump or the pump stays in my pocket."

Even in his dreadful agony Casino hesitated and gazed hollow-eyed at Martin.

"Brine or soapsuds is cheaper, Doc, a lot cheaper. Try them."

But Doc Martin, his face the face of a graven image, although the inward pressure of suppressed hilarity threatened to burst his diaphragm, only shook a professional head.

"Emetics are no good, Casino, in this case. A stomach-pump's your only salvation."

"Here then, Bassett, you son of Shylock!" sniveled Casino. "Take your ill-gotten gains!"

He flung Tom the wad Cuvine had paid him and received the stomach-pump in return.

"There it is, Doc. Be quick and use it. The stuff's gripin' me hard."

SWIFTLY Doc Martin had Casino laid upon the long table. A tablecloth draped on a clothes-horse answered the purpose of a screen, and in a few minutes the Doctor and his patient appeared from behind the screen.

Casino, haggard-faced, walked weakly, his hands to the sides of his head.

"You'll feel better in the air," Martin told him. "Just sit on the steps for a while. And say, Tom," addressing Bassett, "hadn't you and Eric better make final disposition of that meat?"

"Sure," declared Bassett, "it won't do to leave it kickin' round. The water's handy. So we'll sink her thar."

Cuvine's back yard was only a step from the river.

Casino, sitting with Doc Martin on the steps and drawing great lung-drafts of

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air while he responded to the solicitations and congratulations of the crowd in the doorway, saw the partners making for the shed.

"Here, boys, it's in the kitchen," he directed.

"No, we left it in the shed," Sark informed.

"Oh! Did you? All right then, be sure and sink it deep."

Tom and Eric brought out the quarter, tied a big rock to it and dragged it to the water's edge. But while they dragged it along, its perfect symmetry struck Casino as odd and he arose and, leaning on Martin's arm hastened after them.

"Hold on, you got the wrong quarter," he pointed out. "There isn't a slice cut off that one."

Sark and Bassett swung meat and rock out into the dark river.

"No, Casino, thar ain't a slice off that one," grinned Bassett, "and that's the pizened one."

"What?" Casino's glance switched from the laughing partners to Doc Martin, who was lying down upon the beach letting his long-suppressed hilarity loose in howls that brought forth all the crowd in Cuvine's. "That was a good meal Doc relieved me of?"

"Sure was!" cachinnated Bassett. "And you paid seven thousand five hundred and seventy-eight dollars and seventy-five cents for a stomach-pump you didn't need!"

"You serpents!" Casino gasped. "You flim-flammers!"

He stared at the mirth-shaken three, and in his weakness he too began to laugh.

"Come on back in," he cackled hysterically, one hand fastened on Bassett's arm, the other pressed into the pit of his stomach. "I'm empty as a gun-barrel. Come on in, I say. The supper's still on me!"

Decorating the African Girl

CAPT. W. ROBERT FORAN

THE inhabitants of the Nile valley often decorate the upper or lower lip by piercing it and subsequently dilating the hole until it will accommodate a plug of wood as large as an orange. The Bongo and Mittoo women and the tribes of the Makonde plateau and its surrounding country do this. Discs of wood for the upper lip are known as *pélélé* and the lip is prepared for its reception in the same way as the lobe of the ear of the Masai.

The lip is pierced with an awl when the girl is about eight years old. The hole is kept open by means of a piece of grass and further enlarged by using thicker grass or two or three sticks, until it is large enough to receive a piece of palm leaf made into a roll. In time the opening in the lip is big enough to receive a disc of ebony or wood two or three inches in diameter.

Some of the women wear a metal pin or peg in the lower lip. This wooden plug is daily whitened with carefully washed kaolin.

The girl's lip is usually pierced by her maternal uncle; the mother is responsible for maintaining and enlarging the hole. The day is kept as a festival when the first plug is inserted; and a husband cuts a new *pelélé* for his wife.

When a girl with a labret, as it is called, chatters freely the eye can scarcely follow the motions of the disc, and when she laughs the comic effect is indescribable.

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THE GIVEAWAY GAME

By Ross Ellis

Author of "Just Nuts," "The Hawk and the White Elephant," etc.

MR. DANIEL LORING, salesman-at-large, sauntered leisurely up Gamblers' Alley on his way to the Millville Pastime Club at the end of the narrow street. His garb bespoke prosperity, his shoulders were thrown well back, his head was held high, and as he walked he hummed a tune. He had all the seeming of a young man without a care in the world.

Yet "at large" accurately described Mr. Loring's condition as a salesman. Less than twelve hours before—on the morning of that same day—he had been cursed with the curse of Calvin by old Alexander McClennan, and cast out of the employ of the McClennan Pig Iron Agency as "an unregenerate, gambling, carousing wastrel."

His discharge was the aftermath of a poker game in which he had indulged on his last trip as a representative of the McClennan Agency. A customer at Sperry Corners had lamented the dullness of his home town, and Dan had invited him to a party to be held that night in his room at the hotel, salesmen in various lines to be the other guests.

The game had started as a mild little affair with a twenty-five-cent limit, pledged to stop at midnight. When it ended the riding sun was shining through the windows, the limit had been pushed up to the smoke-stained ceiling, and Dan had most of the money.

The customer did not accept his losses in a sportsmanlike spirit. He called the Millvale office on the long-distance 'phone and canceled his order. Pressed for a reason, he gave one—the correct one, though clouded by totally unjustified aspersions on the fairness of the winner's methods. Virtuous indignation on the part of Alexander McClennan. Telegrams. Dan was recalled to headquarters, given a moral lecture, a month's salary, and his passports to that hell for which, according to Mr. McClennan, he was surely bound.

In a purely analytical spirit, Dan was reviewing the matter as he walked along.

"Those four queens I held against his ace-full caused all the trouble," he decided. "I knew I had him beat, and I knew he'd be sore if he lost. A good business man would have laid 'em down and let him win. Then he'd have been happy and I'd have kept my job. But, shucks! When a man gets cards like those he has a sort of duty to them. He just naturally has to play 'em for all they're worth."

His jobless condition worried Dan not one whit. He had a month's salary in his pocket, together with almost three hundred dollars of the winnings of the fateful night. So the immediate future was secure. In his twenty-seven venturesome years he had sold many things, and he was particularly adept in marketing his own services. There would be jobs a-plenty. Still, he had liked

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his connection with the pig-iron business. Its speculative features had appealed to him. Really, he hated to leave it.

He wondered if McClennan had secured the selling agency for the Ferrotown Blast Furnace Company. It was a long-idle manufacturer of southern pig-iron, which had recently become active and was looking for representation in the Northern market. Brook Enslee, the company's general sales agent, was up from the South, and had been expected in the office of the McClennan Agency that day. The Ferrotown Blast Furnace made a high-grade iron. The salesman of the McClennan Agency had been eager to add it to their line.

"But, shucks!" said Dan to himself. "What has that to do with me, now? Nothing at all."

Arrived at the entrance to the Pastime Club, he stopped, and in the light which streamed from the doorway looked at his watch. It was barely eight o'clock, a trifle early for his own particular crowd to have gathered. He decided to continue his stroll in the crisp Autumn air.

AS HE turned, the club-house door opened, closed with a bang, followed by the patter of running feet.

"Mr. Lor-r-ring," called a voice with a heavy Scotch burr, "a wor-r-d wi' ye."

Dan whirled and looked into the whiskered face of Alexander McClennan, his late employer.

"Why, how-de-do?" he said cordially. "Fine night for a ramble, eh? Going my way?"

"I saw ye through the glass o' the dure," panted McClennan, his agitation evidenced by his reversion to the speech of his youth. "Ar-r-re ye willin' to consider a proposeetion fra' me?"

"Sure," said Dan. "Consider anything. Why not?"

"Then come wi' me."

The entrance of "The Doch-an'-Dorris" was but a few steps distant. Alexander McClennan led the way through the swinging doors and into one of the curtained booths that occupied one side of the bar-room.

It was very apparent that Mr. McClennan was much disturbed in mind.

"Mr. Lor-r-ring," he barked, "though I dischar-r-rged ye this mornin', I'm willin' to tak' ye back. Will ye come?"

Dan sipped at his milk-and-seltzer before replying.

"This morning," he said, "you called me a 'gambling, carousing wastrel.' I haven't changed a bit since then."

"F'r all y'r wild ways I think y'r an honest mon, an' I need ye," said the iron broker. After a moment's hesitation he added, "Ye can e'en keep the month's wages I paid ye today, as a bonus."

"All right, boss," agreed Dan. "I'm back on the job. What do you want me to do?"

A gleam of satisfaction lighted up McClennan's face? Then it became serious again.

"I'm in trouble aboot the Ferrotown sales agency," he said. "Mr. Enslee cam' to town today an' telephoned me that he wad be in my office this after-r-rnoon. He didna come. I personally went to his hotel, but he was not there. The clark said—" the old broker's voice grew grim—"that Mr. Hendershot had called, and Mr. Enslee had gone awa' wi' him!"

Dan whistled.

"Wow!" he frowned. "That looks bad."

He could really understand his employer's anxiety. Old Griffith Hendershot, commonly called "The Hawk" in the Millville iron trade, was a silver-haired gentleman of pleasing manners and no morals at all. Though in bad repute because of the predatory nature of his operations, he was always a force to be reckoned with. He might readily impress the man from the South with the belief that he would be an ideal representative.

"Have you any idea where they are now?" demanded Dan.

"They ar-r-re up in one of the Pastime Club's private car-r-rd-rooms playing poker," said McClennan bitterly. "Hendershot, his mon Heevy, three of their friends, and Mr. Enslee. I went up, and Enslee wad not stop to talk to me. He was enjoyin' himself, an' the evenin' was young, an' wad I join in the game? I do na' ken the game, so I cam' awa' to think. Then I saw ye through the dure. An' here we ar-r-re."

He stopped and looked hopefully at the debonair young man on the other side of the table.

Dan nodded.

"I see. You want me to get in that game and stay with Enslee until he goes to bed. Well, I don't mind."

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Alexander McClennan leaned forward and laid a hairy hand on his arm.

"Laddie," he said earnestly, "if ye save that agency for me I'll raise y'r salary. Be carefu' not to play too well—ye remember what happened at Sperry Corners. Let Mr. Enslee win. I'll stand y'r losses mysel'."

"Leave it to me," was Dan's confident reply, as they rose from the table. "I'll make it a regular give-away game."

"But only to Mr. Enslee, mind," warned the thrifty Scot. "I wad na' like to fatten Hendershot's purse."

"Oh, sure," said Dan. "I'll look out for that."

THE group around the cloth-covered table in the private card-room welcomed the newcomer in various ways. Rat-faced little Heevy, who was Hendershot's entire office force, nodded, grinned and went back to shuffling the cards. Hendershot rose with the elaborate courtesy of a gentleman of the old school and introduced Dan first to Brock Enslee, a lean, swarthy, thin-lipped young Southerner, then to the three others—Grout, Rosenbaum and Denby, all out-of-town customers whom he was entertaining.

It was evident that Enslee was winning, for in front of him was a huge stack of chips, but his dark face showed no sign of elation.

"Glad you came, Mr. Loring," he drawled. "We need a seventh man to fill out the table."

"Dot iss so," agreed Rosenbaum, with a smile that revealed beautiful teeth under a sweep of black mustache.

Denby, a tall Linconian individual, rose joint by joint and extended a huge, work-hardened hand.

"Pleased to meet yuh," he beamed. "Set in here between Grout an' me."

Fat little Grout grunted like the animal he resembled and moved his chair slightly to one side.

"I guess you can squeeze in here," he said curtly. "I'm banker. Pay your money to me. Whites are a dollar, reds five, blues ten. We're playing 'em all jack-pots. Ante two whites, open the pot for what you like, and bet anything you have on the table. We invested fifty each to start with; but we've all bought again except Enslee and Rosenbaum."

Dan counted out five twenties from his roll.

"Just to make it even, then, I'll take two stacks," he said.

Then he flipped two white chips to the center, settled back in his chair and began to gather the cards as they slid to him, one by one, across the smooth table.

For the first hour he played with that combination of conservatism and daring which is best calculated to win in strange company. Thrice did he try conclusions with Hendershot, each time to that courtly gentleman's discomfiture; and though he was beaten in minor brushes with Grout and Denby, he evened those losses by bluffing cautious little Heevy out of a pot to which his cards rightfully entitled him.

His original purchase of chips almost trebled, Dan turned his attention to the real object of his presence in that room—something that he had almost forgotten in the thrill of the game. Thus far, by the luck of the cards, he had not been in conflict with Brock Enslee. It was time, he thought, to begin that "give-away game" which was designed to keep the young Southerner friendly toward the House of McClennan. Enslee had lost heavily in a brisk battle with Rosenbaum, and he would be in a proper state of mind to appreciate the contribution which Dan was prepared to make.

Several hands were played before his opportunity came. Then, Enslee opened a pot for the first time in many deals. Rosenbaum, Hendershot and Grout threw down their cards. Dan was the next man, and he stayed with a pair of kings in his hands, while Denby and Heevy dropped out.

It was just as the amateur philanthropist would have wished—only Enslee and himself playing, so that the chips he was determined to lose could not fail to reach the proper destination. He was still further pleased when Enslee stood pat on the draw, while his own hand was not improved by the three cards he called for. The stage was now set. It remained only to play his part.

Silently with impassive face Enslee pushed to the center of the table all his remaining chips. His confidence in his cards was so great that he was betting all he had.

Dan pretended to study his hand, gazed fixedly at Enslee for a moment as if trying to read his face, then began to finger his chips. It was certain, of course, that the Southerner had a straight, a flush or a full house, since he had drawn no cards. It would look foolish to call him with a pair of

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kings. Still, to follow out the plan that was what Dan must do.

"I don't believe you have 'em," he lied, sizing his stock up to Enslee's bet. "I call you with a pair of kings."

The swarthy young man laughed.

"You're right," he said, "I haven't. I opened with a pair of jacks and tried to make 'em look as if they were worth something." He threw his hand face up on the table. "Give me a couple more stacks, Grout. This is a tight, tight game!"

"You're saying something," agreed Denby, whose own supply of chips had dwindled.

Dan drew in the winnings, feeling somewhat dazed. It was not so easy to lose as he had imagined it would be. However, he would make sure the next time. He would not play against Enslee again until he had a hand with which it would be absolutely impossible to win.

While he waited for the situation to shape itself, Henderson and Enslee fought out a spirited battle which resulted in victory for the younger man. As Enslee stacked up his greatly increased checks, Dan noticed that his eyes were blazing and his hitherto colorless face had turned a sullen red. In a moment, however, his countenance was as impassive as before. Vaguely Dan wondered what had caused the sudden emotion.

He forgot the matter in the discovery that the moment he had waited for had arrived. Again Enslee had opened the pot, and as Dan glanced at his own cards he saw that they were utterly worthless. A deuce, a trey, a seven, a nine and a jack, of mixed suits, made up the tale. By no freak of the draw could the hand be transformed into one of value.

ONCE more the others dropped out, leaving only the two opposed. Enslee took two cards on the draw, indicating that he had three of a kind. Dan discarded at random and drew one card. Ostentatiously he let the card which the dealer tossed to him lie face down on the table. He did this for a definite reason.

As he had passed the pot before Enslee opened it, the latter would be sure that he was harmless unless he had bettered in the draw. Since he had not looked at his draw-card, any bet that he might make must be in the nature of a bluff. Enslee would be bound to call him—and win.

The Southerner opened the ball cautiously with a bet of two red chips, which Dan immediately raised by five more of the same denomination. Enslee came back with a counter-raise of five blues. Dan considered. He could not call—that would be too ridiculous; and if he simply passed, the pot which Enslee would win would be too small to be worthy of the elaborate preparations.

He decided that the only thing to do was to raise the bet again, but so slightly that Enslee would certainly either call or make a further raise. No matter which he did, the Southerner would win.

Slowly Dan counted out five blue chips, to which he added one more—a raise of a single chip. The dark-faced young man stared at him for a moment, folded his five cards together and with them tapped the table reflectively.

"It looks like the gentleman was just coaxing me along," he drawled. Then he threw his cards on the table. "Not for me!" he decided. "My three little deuces aren't good enough. I've had people pass up big hands before, and then come in and beat the stuffing out of me. Take the money."

Dan raked in the chips. There was nothing else to do. Try as he would, he could not lose; or, at least, he could not make Enslee win. Instead of ingratiating himself with the man from the South, he was building up an ever-increasing barrier between them. What would old Alexander McClennan say? He would never believe that Dan had tried, that he had done his best. Why, Dan himself wouldn't believe such a story. The thing seemed incredible.

He was so deep in his gloomy musing that Grout had to nudge him twice before he aroused sufficiently to deal. The cards distributed he glanced perfunctorily at his own hand. The cards were of no value. When he looked up again the pot had been opened by Hendershot.

Grout, Dan, Denby, Rosenbaum and Heevy passed in turn. Enslee, however, made good the opening bet and called for one card, while Hendershot likewise drew one.

"I'll make it easy for you," said the iron broker, tossing forward two red chips.

"Did you see me waving any distress signals?" drawled Enslee. "Let's make it a good one." And he swept all his chips to

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the center. "Win or lose, I shall quit after this hand," he announced.

Hawk Hendershot appeared to hesitate. He peered at his cards, ran his fingers through his silvery mane, and smiled benignantly. Then he counted out sufficient chips to equal the other's bet.

"There you are, my boy," he said.

"I have a small heart flush," said Enslee, spreading his cards on the table. "What's yours?"

"You win," said Hendershot, and made a move to bury his hand in the discard.

The Southerner grabbed his wrist.

"Let's see those cards?" he demanded. "I've got a right to see 'em."

He wrenched the cards from Hendershot's fingers, then kicked back his chair and shot to his feet like a released spring, his dark face livid with passion.

"An ace-full, eh?" he gritted. "You were trying to *give* me the pot! Why? That's the second time you've played that trick tonight, Hendershot. What do yuh mean, huh? What sort of a baby game do you think I play? Trying to *bribe* me, were you?"

With a sweeping movement he pushed the chips over to Hendershot's side of the table. Then he turned to Dan.

"Cash in, Mr. Loring, and let's get out of this," he said. "You stung me pretty hard tonight, but that's the way I like to see a man play. Come on down to the hotel. We'll have time to fix up those agency papers before we turn in."

A DROP OR TWO OF WHITE

by

Talbot Mundy

Author of "The Soul of a Regiment," "The Winds of the World, etc.

DUM-DUM Tomkinson began the feud. He owned it, so to speak. Or, if you dig down deep enough to the prime cause of things, Pontius Pilate started it. But then Dum-dum owned Pontius Pilate, so it amounts to the same thing.

At the other end was Antonio Fernandez de Braganza, and what introduced him originally was fifteen rupees that were left to him after he had paid his railway fare from Goa. He was rich enough to buy a decent suit of clothes; and though he could not run to shoes, he looked clean and smiled ingratiatingly. Also, he let himself be kicked without remonstrance.

So a mess sergeant recommended him, and he was hired as extra supernumerary, sub-assistant mess attendant, on half pay. It followed that he made his fortune (there are wheels within wheels in India) and, like all his breed, he did not return to Goa.

But Dum-dum needs introduction first—Dum-dum of the R. & R. Romney and Rotherhithe is the full of it, but they are a great deal better known as the Royal and Reprehensible; and for all their South of England name, they are recruited mainly from the Tower Hamlets, and the purlieus of Wapping High Street, and High Holborn, and the Old Kent Road.

There was scarcely a man in the regiment who had not at some stage in his career sold papers in the streets, or who had not learned at about the time he cut his

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teeth what was wicked and what wasn't, and which was more amusing.

Dum-dum Tomkinson was the private who enjoyed—to the limit—the worst reputation in the regiment. It was he who always egged the others on to mischief, and acted more outrageously than any; but when the time came for discovery and Nemesis he had either a wonderfully worked-out alibi, or else an argument without a flaw.

It was he, for instance, who suggested and led the tying of the British Captain of a Goorkha company one night, and spanked him with his own scabbard; but Privates Giles and Harrison went to jail for it. Dum-dum put pork-fat in the corn meal meant for a Pathan regiment, and all but precipitated a holy war; but a commissariat sergeant got the blame. And Dum-dum cut the drain, and washed the Connaught Rangers out of house and home the first night of the monsoon. The Connaughts blamed the Black Watch and emphasized it with their fists; a half-breed sanitation clerk got reduced and fined, and twenty of the Connaughts and Black Watch got twenty days apiece C. B. Dum-dum got nothing out of it except amusement.

He had a close-cut bullet head, an impudent mustache, and a grin that could rile the very marrow of a provost sergeant. He knew when to grin, and just when not to; and he knew the intricacies of the Queen's Regulations better than a cat knows the way home along the house tops. And—with an utterness unspeakable—he did not love Antonio Fernandez de Braganza.

AT THE bottom of the hill, facing the long barrack lines of British infantry, there nestled, hot and horrible, the city of Deesiribad. It had a tower or two, whence muezzins called the faithful to bellowing prayer, some minarets, and half a dozen Hindu temples. From a distance, unless the wind bore the smell in that direction, it looked sweet and almost biblical, belying its true character. There, in a shack of sorts, that had a row of trees growing in the space in front of it, Antonio Braganza—barefooted still, but owner now of a thousand-rupee bank account—established his "HOTEL FOR EUROPEANS ONLY."

All that had nothing in the world to do with Jock. He was a dog that the Black Watch owned, and they swore he was a champion in every way there is. He was big and bony and bad-tempered, and they were quite prepared to bet on him.

But Dum-dum owned Pontius Pilate and a very tricky brain; so the Scotsmen had to lay the odds—as much as nine to five in cases. The fight took place on the parade-ground, and Pontius Pilate won. The Black Watch, being sportsmen and consequently men of honor, paid; the seed of happenings was sown; and Dum-dum and a dozen friends went down hill to Braganza's to blow the money in.

When the money was all spent the provost sergeant and a patrol looked in on the scene, and picked Dum-dum and his friends from under tables and out of corners, and frog-marched them up-hill back to barracks. There was nothing unusual in that, nor anything unmerciful in fourteen days' cells apiece and twenty-one days' C. B. that followed as a natural corollary. So far nobody bore any grudge.

But Antonio Fernandez de Braganza was a man of business acumen and foresight. He came to the orderly room next morning and showed the commanding officer a dirty scrap of paper bearing the signature of P. H. Tomkinson, private, R. & R., with a scrawl above it admitting full responsibility for damage done. Pinned to it was Antonio's private estimate amounting to a total of two hundred rupees.

Dum-dum denied the signature, but the Colonel made him write his name twelve times quickly in his presence, and the handwriting was found to correspond. Then Dum-dum denied indignantly that he had written anything above the signature; but the provost sergeant swore, the guard deposed, and Dum-dum himself admitted that he had been far too drunk that night to remember anything. So all that remained to be done was to audit the amount of damages.

After considerable heated argument, the Colonel reduced the total down to seventy rupees, and ordered Dum-dum's pay assessed accordingly. Antonio departed smiling, and Dum-dum went swearing back to cells, feeling for the first time since he passed through his recruit course that he had got "the dog's end of a deal."

Even yet, though the matter was not serious, the memory of it rankled in Dum-dum's mind, but his thirst grew, too, as he

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worked at the fatigues an ingenious sergeant-major devised for him. And, with the thirst, there came a plan into his head.

So he reported eventually off the C. B. list, and cleaned himself, and shook the dust of barracks off his feet, and marched off down the hill to execute the plan.

"Four fingers o' them idol's tears o' yours!" he demanded. "Quick!"

"Four annas!" smiled Antonio, showing his amazing teeth and mopping at the bar.

"Quick, I said, you Christy minstrel! Throw your weight about!"

"No money, no brandy!" smiled Antonio.

"See 'ere!" said Dum-dum, leaning one elbow on the bar, and holding his other hand suspiciously behind him. "You've 'ad the best o' me—so far. Not countin' what I spent in 'ere that night o' the dawg fight, you've 'ad thirty-five rupees o' my pay, and there's another thirty-five a-comin'. Well an' good. You 'and across that bottle like a man, or I'll show you 'ow a man be'aves!"

Braganza grinned and showed the whites of his eyes as he glanced sidewise. In the mirror he could see that Dum-dum's other hand was empty after all.

"I—ah—do not geeve credit."

"You'll credit me with seventy dibs' worth, you black heathen, against that pay o' mine you're drawin', or I'll fix you so's you won't never sell no more booze to nobody—see?"

Braganza knew from grim experience the consequence of arguing with soldiers, so he finished wiping off the bar and stepped behind a glass door to the rear; thence he could watch the bottles on the shelves without obtruding his provocative personality.

"Come out o' that!"

There was no answer.

"You ten parts nigger, one part dago thief, come out o' that, d'ye hear?"

But still there was no answer.

So, as any righteous-minded gentleman belonging to a race of conquerors would do under similar conditions, Dum-dum picked up the brass spittoon with the portrait of the King of Portugal on it, and pitched it through the glass panel as a hint.

Five minions of Braganza's—all his countrymen, and all barefooted—answered his raucous summons, and bravely essayed to throw Dum-dum out into the street. He had on ammunition boots, of course, and his temper had not been sweetened by his thirst.

So his five antagonists sat down in acrobatic attitudes in different spots and nursed their injured feet, while Dum-dum with a bottle in each hand rushed around and did his best to brain the terrified Braganza. He had hit him twice, and had smashed one bottle, when the provost sergeant happened in again.

"And I didn't get one drink—not one!" mourned Dum-dum afterward.

He was frog-marched up the hill again, still fighting, with a fragment of the patrol's trousers in each hand; and they had to put a strait-jacket on him in the guard-room, he was so indignant. But by next morning he put up a wonderful defense.

He swore that he had been suddenly attacked by overwhelming numbers without the slightest provocation, and that his righteous indignation had been roused almost to mania by Antonio Braganza's uninvited strictures on the character and habits of the Colonel of the R. & R.

"Called you a drunkard, sir, 'e did!"

So he only got fourteen days again in cells, and twenty-one C. B.

But there—all red and ready—was a blood feud of the type that keeps the East and West apart more thoroughly than sea or mountain range. A white man had been bested by a very black man, and the black man would not surrender even part of what was his.

It was a cloud like a man's hand rising on the five-weeks-off horizon, and all Deesiribad proceeded to await the outcome with feelings not unmixed. Some laughed, and some were frightened; some counseled friend Antonio to pull up stakes and quit. But Antonio, for reasons of his own, stayed on, and hoped and prayed that luck might avert the breaking of the storm.

II

THE native of the East who has a little, little drop of white or near-white blood in him is sometimes blacker than the purest aborigine. But just as the East can hear halftones of music undetectable by Western ears, so Goanese for instance, can see grades of color where their scornful white detractors notice nothing but ungraded ebony.

Antonio Fernandez de Braganza boasted —when nobody with boots on was about— of a great-great-grandfather who had been

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a Portuguese post-office clerk, full-blooded. He would not mix with people whose great-great-grandfathers had been half-breeds, unless from dire necessity. He looked blacker than the ace of spades to Western eyes, but he would speak of any one he thought his equal as "almost as light-colored as myself." And not a man in all his dusky brotherhood would smile.

That, naturally, was a point of view that bred ambition far more burning than the money-making kind.

Antonio knew soldiers. Ever since his star had begun to rise in India's firmament he had been associated with them; and he had been kicked by them until his sense of their superiority was fixed, like well dried-out cement. It would have taken dynamite to shift it.

Once, after a dinner that made history in western India, he had been kicked by a full-blown major-general, and there are astonishingly few mortal men so favored. Antonio was proud of it. He wore the memory of that kick as other men would wear a medal, only more so.

Soldiers were his living, his horizon. They had always made the difference to him between abject poverty and wonderful prosperity. So it was not more than natural that what at best annoyed most Europeans should seem to him like brilliant spots upon the darkened page of history. When Thomas Atkins so far forgot his pride of race, and his prospects, as to marry a half-caste woman, there would be swearing in the clubs and messes and canteens; but Antonio Fernandez de Braganza would buy himself a new pair of colored cotton trousers, and take his boots out of the locker, and attend the wedding.

Then for a week he would talk in strangely sounding English, meant to show class-exclusiveness, and he would call his cronies "dear old chappie, don'tcherknow."

As year succeeded year and the original thousand-rupee bank account swelled gradually up into the tens of thousands, there crept into the bosom of Antonio a secret thought that grew, from cherishing, into a wish—that waxed, and dared, and mounted to a hope—and finally became ambition. It was nothing yet to boast about, or whisper; but if ever great poetic soul nursed fevered longings underneath a dusky skin; if ever brown eyes blazed with checked emotion; if ever voice betrayed by altered tones its owner's awakening to a sense of greater things—that voice, those eyes, that spirit were Antonio's.

He began to clip and carve his straggling black beard into a neat torpedo shape, and keep it so. He took to wearing boots every evening, and a clean shirt once a week.

In fact, he did all the things, and did them thoroughly, that betray the insidious encroachments of the little love god.

And she—who shall describe her? Certainly Antonio could not. She counted for nothing to the privileged white-skinned race, and for less than nothing to the altogether dark; but among the snuff-and-butter-colored bloods she ranked as more than queen.

Snuff and butter in the right proportions blend into a glowing gold that sets off raven hair and dark-brown eyes to absolute perfection. Her beauty alone would have brought her social distinction in the half-caste world, but the fact that her father had been a quartermaster-sergeant, British born, placed her so far above the rest as to make Antonio's ambition like that of an earthworm aspiring to the air.

The father had died, and had been relegated gladly to oblivion by his own race. Her mother drew a tiny pension, ran a boarding-house, and died too, leaving Alexandra Eulalia Sophia Hendon a modest competence; and an aunt—on the mother's side, and dark—looked after her as if she were a princess of the blood royal.

Antonio's chances, then, were slim. Money counts for something in all layers of society, but such gulfs as lie between a quartermaster-sergeant's daughter who is quite half white and beautiful as well, and a Goanese innkeeper boasting of nothing better than a drop or two of Portuguese, are unbridgable by anything except the superhuman.

Love, though, is superhuman. Antonio knew as much from studying his own sensations. So he started, with all the poetry and fervor of the East and West combined, to wage strategic warfare against convention. And any woman, tackled that way, will be flattered, no matter who the besieger is. Besides, there was Pontius Pilate.

While Dum-dum Tomkinson toiled at barrack-yard fatigues, the ill-conditioned mongrel wandered as he chose, and picked up a living mostly on the back verandas of dark-skinned hosts who were afraid of him.

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In fact, he levied blackmail, for everybody knew to whom he belonged and what dire consequences might result from using sticks and stones to drive the brute away. So he waxed fat and prospered.

The houses where he found the blackmail easiest were those where only women lived, and of them the easiest of all was that occupied by Alexandra Eulalia Sophia Hendon and her aunt. There he would choose to lie, then, through the long hot afternoons, and suffer scraps to be tossed to him whenever a mere woman wished to venture out of doors.

Thither, too, came Antonio, booted and flossed up in his best, to make excuses for an interview.

If Alexandra Eulalia Sophia, with pale blue ribbon in her hair, should choose the moment of his coming to seek coolness on the veranda, that was nobody's affair but hers. But the mongrel lying in the shade snarled none the less, and Alexandra screamed. She naturally had no scraps of meat with her; and the swinging chair that showed her figure off so well was at the far end of the veranda. Besides, she had a very pretty ankle. She did not want to encourage Antonio's attentions openly, but she did want to be admired; so she drew her dress back, and essayed to pass the growling brute without touching him.

The dog flew at her, seized her dress, ripped off a yard of it, and flew at her again.

What long-forgotten Vasco da Gama blood rose then in Antonio's veins, or how he overcame the cowardice inbred by centuries of scorn and terrorism, are matters Dan Cupid must decide; but he acted on the instant. He vaulted the veranda rail, and landed boots and all on the back of the worst-tempered parasite of the British Army.

In a second, before he realized what he had done, he was fighting for dear life with a brute whose only leave to live was granted him because he could outfight anything. The dog had him by the throat—he was in his best clothes, and had donned a collar fortunately—and the end seemed a question only of how long Antonio could cling to life without drawing any breath.

The aunt rushed out and screamed. Alexandra screamed. Several neighbors came and screamed. There was plenty of advice, but nobody did anything—except Antonio. He worked his toil-strengthened fingers in between the brute's jaws, and began to break the teeth one by one. In a minute, he could force two fingers in; a second later, he could force in three; and then he reached for, grabbed, and held the tongue, driving his nails in to overcome the slipperiness.

The dog, for one foolish, ill-considered fraction of a second, loosed his hold to get a better grip and end things; and in that instant his tongue came out by the roots. The rest was easy. In another minute Antonio had him by the hind legs and was dashing out his brains against the veranda woodwork.

It was Alexandra Eulalia Sophia's fingers that bathed and bandaged poor Antonio's wounds, her fan that cooled him, her lips that praised him until Heaven knew what sensations coursed up and down his spine. It was her aunt who asked him in, and brought up the wicker chair for him, and told him he might call again as often as he chose; and it was Alexandra Eulalia Sophia who sat beside him in the *tikka-gharri* that was sent for to take the hero home.

But deep, deep down in Antonio's happy, hopeful heart, there lay a feeling of impending trouble. It would not die away. It grew. It took away more than nine-tenths of his happiness, and sometimes even sickened him with fright.

Up in the barrack yard, doing endless, aggravating, hard-labor fatigues in the hot sun, Dum-dum Tomkinson had heard about the death of Pontius Pilate, and the circumstances that attended it.

He had not vowed vengeance. He had grinned, and a full description of the grin had been carried to Antonio within eight hours by a dozen different people.

Had Dum-dum uttered threats, Antonio could have asked for and received protection. But Dum-dum did not threaten. If Dum-dum had broken bounds, and had come down in the night to break Antonio's head, spies would have brought the news, and an arrest would have been made in time.

But Dum-dum only toiled on in the barrack square, and grinned, and Antonio—making amazing progress with his love affair—felt, with each new step won, more like a murderer under sentence.

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III

MOST OTHER Eurasians still scoffed at the idea of Antonio's love-suit. To slaves of the iron-bound middle sphere, that is neither black nor white, his marriage to Alexandra Eulalia Sophia was unthinkable.

But to Dum-dum Tomkinson the whole thing was instantly an open book. That is the way of Thomas Atkins, who thinks himself an Orientalist, and really is nothing of the kind. He ignores the standards and devious arguments and byways of the East, and sometimes arrives—by a jump—at perfectly correct conclusions.

The orderly-room clerk was a friend of his, and as it happened passed him in the barrack square within a quarter of an hour of the breaking of the news about his dog. All the regimental, and many other records were available to the clerk at practically any time.

"Who's this 'ere Mrs. Wade?" asked Dum-dum. " 'Er what 'as the 'ouse where Pontius Pilot lost 'is number?"

"Widow of a railway man. Guardian, or what you care to call it, to Miss Hendon."

"She the gal what Ponpi tried to worry? Know anything about 'er?"

"I can find out."

Within an hour Dum-dum knew that Alexandra Eulalia Sophia was the daughter of Quartermaster-sergeant Hendon, of the R. & R., deceased; and the grin that he had worn since they had told him of the dog's death grew wider.

"Didn't know as 'ow we was ever quartered 'ere afore," he volunteered for the sake of further information.

"We weren't. The other battalion was at Ahmedabad. Hendon took his discharge there, and came up here to live."

"Gawd pity 'im!"

"His daughter's a piece of all-right! Yum-yum!"

"So?" Dum-dum seemed relieved to hear it. " 'Ow is it none of us never sees 'er, then?"

"Keeps 'erself to 'erself—respectable gal—brought up proper. That's why."

Dum-dum seemed extremely edified to hear it. His face beamed pleasure.

"I 'opes as 'ow she's all she ought to be!" he muttered piously, slapping on the whitewash. "I 'opes as 'ow 'e loves 'er. I 'opes as 'ow she means the 'ole bloomin' world to 'im, an' more. I does—I do—I does. So 'elp me two privates an' a provost sergeant, I surely does!"

For the rest of that afternoon, and all that evening, although the sergeant-major found a dozen extra tasks for him and nagged him pitilessly, Private Dum-dum Tomkinson grinned happily.

He grinned day after day, and was grinning still when he reported off the C. B. list.

During the three or four hot months that followed, Dum-dum behaved himself in such an exemplary manner that his intimates chaffed him about playing for promotion. He repudiated that with all the scorn it merited, but he steadfastly refused to get drunk in canteen or elsewhere, and he avoided Braganza's as though it were a plague spot.

But he kept himself very well informed on the progress of the love affair, and when the engagement was at last announced he was among the first to hear of it. He was one of the first, too, to call on Antonio and congratulate him when the date for the wedding had been fixed.

"I wishes yer luck, Antonio, my son! I wishes yer Gawd's own luck! I 'opes as 'ow yer comes by yer deserts! Shake 'ands on that!"

So Antonio shook hands, and Dum-dum swaggered out again, leaving the unhappy Goanese quaking and suffering beneath a sickening load of fear.

It was noticeable after that that Dum-dum spent a lot of spare time talking to his cronies, and even with men who were not at all his cronies. He walked down to the Black Watch lines, and argued there for an hour or two, but did not seem to have much luck.

He got one or two men interested, but that was all. Thence, though, he went to the Connaught Rangers, and found the Irishmen like tinder waiting for a match; soon he had half the regiment arguing with the other half in odd corners.

"And remember this," he kept on telling them. "That day's the very day when the polo championship comes off at Abu. There'll be just enough officers left 'ere to do the rounds, and not a perishing extry one! We'll 'ave it all our own way—an' they can't 'ang, nor yet C. B. three 'ole reg'ments!"

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IV

THE City Magistrate was taking *chota hazri* on his cool veranda in pajamas when an abject individual —barefooted, but arrayed in wondrous cotton trousers—approached him diffidently through the compound. He salaamed profoundly, then recalled his modicum of white blood and stood upright, hands beside him, hat in hand. The hat was a marvel—panama type, two feet wide from brim to brim.

"What d'you want?" The magistrate was none too pleased to hear petitions at that hour of the day.

"Ver - ee sor - ee, sir, to trouble you, but——"

He shifted from one foot to the other, looking sheepish, foolish, helpless—anything but like a bridegroom; head a little to one side, and his hat moving restlessly from hand to hand. His toes, too, twiddled as though he were in torture.

"Well, what?"

"I will be getting married this morning, sir."

"—— you, Braganza! Didn't I sign the license? Don't I know it? Go and get married, and confound you!"

"But, sir——"

He was more than ever abject. His teeth were a splash of purest white on a sea of black, and his eyes two alternating spheres of white and brown.

"But what?"

"I am ver-ee much af-raid, sir."

"Of what?"

"Sir, of the militar-ee."

"Of the soldiers? Why?"

"They are likel-ee to make trouble, sir."

"Indeed? What makes you suppose that?"

"There is one certain Private Tomkinson, sir, who is my enemy."

"Now we're getting nearer! That cuts it down to one man. Has he been making threats?"

"Five months ago, sir, he——"

"And you have the impudence to come here at this hour and bother me, because a drunken private chose to threaten you five months ago? Has he threatened you since?"

"Not openl-ee, sir."

"How d'you mean—not openly?"

"He has smiled, sir, ver-ee meaningl-ee."

"Oh, he has, has he? And because this private grinned at you, I'm to be disturbed at breakfast, eh? I'll give you just one minute to get out of the compound! Boy! Bring me my watch and dog whip, quickly!"

So Antonio took his leave in something less than half the time allotted to him, and, trembling at the knees and sick at heart, set himself to watching from his roof for signs of catastrophe descending from the hill. He knew—and his heart turned to water within him at the thought—that on a Thursday, with many more than half the officers away, there would be nothing much to keep the soldiers in barracks.

And he labored under no delusions about Tomkinson. There was too much Eastern subtlety and atmosphere about Dum-dum's smiling silence for Braganza not to understand the meaning of it. The wedding was no secret; on the contrary, it was to be a Goanesely brilliant affair. Dum-dum had congratulated him, so Dum - dum knew about it. But Dum-dum had said nothing! The suspense of wondering what was going to happen was worse than the torturing wait had been for Alexandra Eulalia Sophia's answer!

He was all but sweating blood when the time came to draw his boots on, and make a brave show before his friends, and drive to the little Catholic chapel on the outskirts of the city. He did try to smile, but the result was sickly; it only accentuated the green tint underneath his dusky skin.

"Oh, how he is in love!" sighed Cortez, his best man.

"Ah, what a passion holds him!" nodded de Catania, climbing in and sitting with his back to the horses (they had two!).

"Love! Love is like the sun; it wilts the flower it shines on!" quoted Mendez, buttoning a white glove, and getting in beside de Catania. "Antonio is the flower of chivalry! Behold—he wilts!"

It was all in English—all meant seriously —all designed to leave in friend Antonio's mind pleasant memories of a day of days, civilized to the last notch, and brimming over with refinement. They only wished they were as pale as he, that they might do more honor to him.

The carriage started; the white-beriboned driver beat the pair of crocks to make them prance, and the three friends attended to their smiles and the set of their salmon-pink cravats. But Antonio groaned aloud.

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"Ah, love is a ver-ee seerious malad-ee," approved Cortez. "Ha-ha! A fortunate affliction! One we are praying is contag-i-ous! Ha-ha-ha!"

"Look!" groaned Antonio, and they all three stared. All three turned gray as friend Antonio beneath the black.

THERE was a dust-cloud on the hillside—a cloud kicked up by men who marched, and by far more than a dozen men. There were many hundred coming down the hill, not in formation, but in little groups of three and four who marched as they chose, though all in one direction.

"Mother of God!" groaned Antonio, leaning back against the horse-hair cushions in a state of near-collapse. "They will get there first—they will reach the chapel first—they will——"

Even in that awful moment he spoke English, and set a good example to the rest; but there his ability to be a man left off. He was only Portuguese and water, and he knew it—nine parts water, black.

"Possibl-ee they go to play a football match," suggested he of the purple pants, de Catania, the optimist.

"Or a battle bee-tween dogs," hazarded Mendez; and at the mere suggestion of a dog-fight poor Antonio groaned from bitterness of recollection.

"Let us drive another way," advised Cortez. "Let us ap-proach thee chapel from thee far side (his teeth were chattering) and notice casual-ee what they do, beefore taking the matter underneath advisement—that ees my idee-a. Ho—*gharri-wallah—sita haht!*"

The driver pulled out to the right, but Antonio recovered some of his self-possession all at once; he sat up suddenly, and struck at the driver with a silver-mounted cane.

"No-no-no! Drive on, driver! Drive ahead! No turning a-side! Straight! (every word of it in English, still!) She will bee waiting there for me—there will bee onlee women with her," he said in explanation. The little drop of white was coming uppermost.

"Trul-ee—she might conceivabl-ee suppose we are afraid," assented Mendez, feeling at his collar, that bordered on collapse.

"She will know better!" snapped Antonio. "She will be waiting there. That iss thee reason!"

His three friends sat and stared at him. Was this Antonio? They had thought him more afraid than they!

All four of them nearly fell out of the carriage as they rounded the last corner but one before the chapel. There was a little public square in front of them, and it was crammed, jammed full with soldiers. There were Connaughts there, and R. & R.'s, and Highlanders, though not so many Highlanders. And there was Dum-dum, grinning; he stood out in front.

"They appear exceedingl-ee susceptible to provocation!" diagnosed Cortez timidly.

"Possibl-ee they come to celebrate the wedding of a former mess-attendant," hoped Mendez out aloud. "That would indeed be most praiseworth-ee."

Dum-dum cut the speculation short. "Halt!" he roared; and like a flash—as if a shell had fallen in their midst—the three friends vanished. They streaked over the high back of the carriage, and vamoosed. The watching soldiers roared.

"Give an account o' yourself!" demanded Dum-dum. "Where are you goin'?"

"You know me, and you know where I am going," said Antonio. "Allow me to drive on. I go to marry Miss Hendon."

He felt very lonely in the carriage by himself, but he was too busy scanning faces for a possible sympathizer to find time to think about the friends who had deserted him.

" 'Ear that, mates? This 'ere black Goanese swine says as 'ow 'e's a-goin' to marry the daughter of a bloomin' British sergeant!"

The announcement was greeted with another roar of laughter. There were no sympathizers there. The men were evidently bent on mischief. Saving just here and there, the laughter had almost none of the ugly-sounding mob-mirth in it, but to Antonio it pealed out like the knell of doom.

"Get out!" commanded Dum-dum. "Sittin' in a kerridge while your betters stand in the 'ot sun! The bloomin' idea!"

Dum-dum made a move to the carriage wheel, and in an instant he was joined by fifty others. They turned it over, and released the horses, but Antonio landed on his feet; he was surrounded now, though, and cut off from all escape. The uniformed, grinning crowd drew back, and left him with Dum-dum, standing in the middle of a circle.

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"This 'ere marriage ain't a-goin' to take place!" asserted Dum-dum truculently.

"No?" said Antonio. "Why not?"

"Because h-I says so! There's a tank o' stinkin' water two 'undred yards from 'ere —unless you wants a bath more than usual extry, you'd better swear off marryin'!"

"How about that seventy rupees?" shouted a voice from somewhere in the crowd. "Ask him to explain that!"

"Ay! Make him give up the seventy dibs!"

"I will not!" said Antonio, chin up; and the soldiers left off laughing.

" 'E'd rather 'ave the seventy than the gal!" sneered Dum-dum. "Come on—let's duck 'im!"

"Compared to you," said Antonio quietly, "I am a rich man—ver-ee rich. Rupees sevent-ee are nothing—positively nothing—a mere bagatelle!" He snapped his fingers eloquently.

" 'And 'em over, then!"

"I will not!"

" 'Ear that, you blokes? 'E says 'e's rich, an' yet 'e won't pay like a man! 'Ow's that for a blighter?"

But at that point a Highlander joined in. He stepped up to Antonio, and laid a huge hand on his shoulder; the little man wilted in terror at the touch.

"Mon, y're ain frien's have left ye. Ye're in the wrong. Why else did they leave ye?"

"They? Bee-cause they are colored men!" declared Antonio, his breast swelling visibly. "Their great-great-grandfathers were black!"

A hurricane of laughter greeted that reply; the soldiers roared until the native population came running out through the city gate to find out what was happening. A party ran, too, from the chapel, and the Goanese priest sent a messenger to find out the cause of the delay.

"Bah! Duck 'im, an' get it over!" shouted Dum-dum. "What's the use o' talkin'?" But again the Scotsman intervened.

"Na-na! Wait a wee! Let's hear what the mon has to say."

It was evident that Antonio did have something to say, for he had cleared his throat; and though his eyes were wild and the sweat was running down his face onto his concertina-ed collar, he thrilled with determination.

"Why shall I not marry?" he demanded, facing Dum-dum, and looking at him straight between the eyes.

"Because you're a dirty little 'undreth-part Portuguee an' she ain't!"

"And, the dee-ference, for instance, between you and me is——"

"I ain't goin' to marry the gal!"

"But the dee-ference?"

Dum-dum was getting rattled; he preferred to do the cross-examining himself.

"The difference? Why, you're a dirty little black cur—that's the diff'rence!"

"Ah! So that is it? Do you dare fight me—with your feests? You, who are not a cur? It is you and I who have the quarr-el, is it not?"

"D'ye 'ear that, mates? 'E wants to fight me—'im!"

"The mon's a mon!" declared the Highlander, looking down at Antonio with something of a twinkle in his eye. The jeers of the crowd gave place to laughter and squeals of merriment.

"Go on, Dum-dum! Fight him! You're challenged—can't refuse! Mustn't show the white feather! Make a ring! Fetch two buckets, some one!"

Antonio began to peel his clothes, and as each fresh article came off, the soldiers shrieked with laughter. He took off the wonderful Prince Albert, and folded it, and laid it in the dust—unhitched the pink-striped dickie—laid it on the coat lovingly —and stood in a Joseph-colored cotton shirt and flowered suspenders, waiting. He looked like a scarecrow that somebody had robbed, but his eye was steady now.

"I need a second!" he demanded.

"Fetch one of 'is pals back, then!" ordered Dum-dum.

"No. They are colored men. They are not my class! I need a proper second, one befitting my condition!"

That brought out another roar of delight, but there was sudden silence when the gigantic Highlander stepped up to him.

"I'll gie ye a knee, mon—ye're a plucked 'un!" He smiled, and stooped, and picked up Antonio's coat.

The thing was beyond a joke now, and Dum-dum began to peel his tunic off.

"Hell!" he shouted, turning to the crowd behind him. "H-I can't fight *'im!* Why, s'elp me Gawd, I can lick 'im with one 'and!"

But the consensus of opinion seemed to be against him; military etiquette is strict, and a challenge is a challenge. Off came Dum-dum's tunic, and he tossed it to a man behind him.

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"We ought to ha' done what I said," he grumbled. "We ought to ha' gone straight to the chapel, an' stopped the weddin' there."

"A priest's a priest!" answered a private of the Connaughts, and a murmuring chorus of approval showed that the Irishmen had vetoed that part of the proceedings. Half-breed or not, they will respect the cloth if not the man who wears it. Poor little Antonio, with the grim, gaunt Highlander behind him, stood and pulled his courage up out of his boots, and prayed that a priest might come like the spirit of Aladdin's lamp and save him.

"Three-minute rounds!" shouted somebody. "Take your corner, Dum-dum! Mind 'e don't slip one over on you!"

"Blast 'im, 'e killed my dawg!" swore Dum-dum, searching for a salve for his none-too-sensitive conscience; it was pricking him now for the first time in his recollection. In the first place, Antonio was barely half his size. And all the regiment, or nearly all of it, was looking on.

"Time!" called a self-appointed referee, and Antonio stepped out bravely into the middle of the cleared space, and stood there waiting, with his fists clenched. He clenched them as a woman does, with the thumbs inside, and he held them like a runner at his second mile.

"Gawd! 'Ere, mates, I can't stand this! I'm a white man! I can't fight a Goanese!"

Antonio Braganza stood still, breathing heavily, and praying for the fortune that is said to favor brave men. He took one glance behind him, and noticed that his Highland second was smiling through puckered eyes; that gave him a little confidence, but not much.

"Time's called!" said the Highlander. "Ma mon's waitin'!"

Dum-dum squared himself, and struck a fighting attitude, and looked his adversary over. Then he threw his hands up, and drew back again.

"Gawd! I ain't a h-executioner! I can't stand this!"

"Will ye fight?" the Highlander demanded. "Ma mon's a-weary o' waitin' for ye to begin!"

"No—so 'elp me Gawd, I won't fight that! There can't be no fight wi' a thing like that!"

"I told ye ma mon's waitin'. I asked ye, will ye fight?"

"And I said 'no!' —— you! This 'ud be bloomin' murder! I could get ten year in jail for it!"

"Then, count him oot!" roared the Scotsman; and like a flash, the whole crowd saw the humor of it.

"Seven—eight—nine—ten!" they roared in unison. "He's out!"

"MA MON wins! He's proved himself a mon! He's won the lassie!"

The giant seized Antonio by both elbows, and tossed him up sky-high. A sea of helmets rose to greet him, and a roar went up that told Antonio his erstwhile enemies were friends.

"His lassie's waitin' for him!" yelled the Highlander, swinging him aloft again.

"And the priest—the priest's waiting," shouted the Connaughts.

"Where's his best man? Where are his pals?"

"—— his pals! I'm his best mon!" And up went Antonio again.

"The carriage, then! Put in the horses!"

"Dom the horses! Mak' Dum-dum pull him!"

That was a grand idea, and there was a swirl and a rush to look for Dum-dum; but that gentleman had vanished. They caught sight of him making at the double for the hill where the barracks were.

A minute later, the carriage was standing on its wheels again; three minutes after that, it stopped with a jerk before the little chapel, and, carried aloft by an enormous Highlander amid a swarming mob of laughing soldiers, Antonio was borne into the chapel to be married—with unregulation military honors—to a quartermaster sergeant's daughter.

He found his three friends waiting for him by the altar; they had slipped round by another road and had said nothing of Antonio's predicament. Cortez, the best man, stepped up to Antonio's side.

"What are niggers doing here?" asked Antonio with dignity. "This is the wedding of a gentleman."

So they threw the "niggers" out until Antonio Fernandez de Braganza and Alexandra Eulalia Sophia Hendon had been made legal man and wife.

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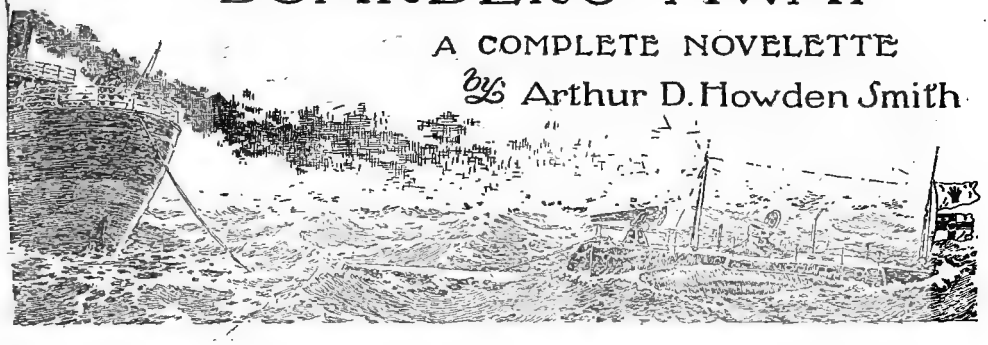
BOARDERS AWAY

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Arthur D. Howden Smith



Author of "The Sinews of War," "The Man Who Could Not Die," etc.

"IT'S NO' verra easy—shippin' a whole crew," said Jock Grant with dejection in his voice.

"I wilna split up ma men," returned Miles McConaughy. "So long as they're rready to stick by me, I'll stick by them."

"There's alw'ys the auxiliary service," commented Evan Apgar tentatively.

"Serrve under the English navy? Arre ye mad, man?" roared McConaughy. "Ye know ma principles, and I'm takin' it for grranted ye hold by the same line o' thought, yerself."

"Ay, ay," Apgar hastened to agree. "Hi'm by no means suggestin' abandonment o' principles, skipper. Principles is grand for the soul, fair meat o' morality, Hi s'ys. But we be hungry, and the men be hungrier still. Something 'ave got to turn up. That's flat."

McConaughy groaned.

"Ay, something. But what? Here I am, a masterrr with never a black mark against his ticket, with a company fair starrvin' for wantin' to wait an' ship with me again. An' I can't get a berth. It seems like the luck that was mine went with the old *William and Mary*, when that German hellhound dinged it to her in the Caribbean. I'm after walkin' the soles of ma shoes off, trompin' up and down the stairs o' shippin'-offices. But what is there? Most o' these owners are stranglin' wi' fear o' the submarine blockade; an' because I lost ma ship, through no fault o' ma own, they give me the cold shoulder, me, Miles McConaughy!"

In the stress of his feeling, McConaughy rose to his feet and commenced to pace up and down the narrow confines of the small room the three had taken near the Belfast water-front. To this had they been reduced in the course of several weeks of unsuccessful endeavor to find any ship-owner or charterer who was willing to take over an entire ship's company, from bridge to coal-trimmers, in the parlous days that followed immediately the proclamation of the German submarine blockade about the British Isles.

"Hoot, skipper, I wouldna put it quite so bad against yerself," interjected Grant, his first officer, with kindly intent. "There's never a ship-owner in Belfast holds it against ye for losin' the *William and Mary*. They know ye were in the same fix wi' many another master. It's na a question o' personal prejudice, I ken, but o' a temporary peculiarity in the situation, complicated maybe a wee bit, by the fact that it's not every owner ye meet who is in the poseetion to ship an entire company at once."

"All o' us or none," snapped McConaughy. "I ha' told them that from the start, an' so long——"

"Hi'm right be'ind ye, skipper!" exclaimed Apgar. "But speakin' for me men in the Black Gang, it's gettin' pious 'ard, this 'avin' to stand clear o' the lovely fightin' wot's goin' on all round us—an' us knowin' we've struck as shrewd a blow as any navy fellers."

Huge Jock Grant wet his lips longingly.

"If we were in some bonny bit patrol-boat, now," he murmured. "A trawler, maybe, or some wee creature wi' the

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engines for Evan to nurrse, out in the North Sea b'ither." McConaughy turned upon them in anguish.

"Would ye all deserrt me?" he bellowed. "Tak' serrvice underr the English? I could go to Liverrpool tomorrer, foreby, an' pick ma ship wi' a line I know, an' a gilt-edged Boarrd o' Directors settin' up in Lunnon town. But would I do it? Would I? Ye know me, Evan Apgar, Jock Grant. Would I do it? I'd starrve on the Docks firrst. I'd beg ma way through Popish Galway."

He bubbled and frothed, and even Jock Grant huddled his big knees together and tried to look small.

"I wouldna have an Englishman on ma ships. If the English Navy men had been up to their jobs we'd have the old *William* this day. D'ye mind how that English navy captain on the *Elk* was so ready an' anxious to pluck for himself the credit for our sinkin' the *Unser Fritz*? Ay? An' ye have the face, either o' ye, to suggest for a minit takin' serrvice in the English Navy! Bah!"

"It's the fightin'," protested Apgar.

"The bonny fechtin'," echoed Grant.

"As fine a lot o' men as we be," continued Apgar; "an' by the w'y it looks now, no more chance to tyke another rap at the Dutchmen."

McConaughy glared at them.

"It's no morre easy for me than for you," he growled. "But I have——"

There was a knock on the door.

Apgar looked at Grant and Grant looked from the chief engineer to his captain.

"D'ye think it might be the landlydy?" whispered the Welshman gruffly.

"If 'tis she, she'll get her pay an' we'll seek otherr lodgings," returned McConaughy grimly. "I'll no' be owein' money—even to an Episcopalian."

But instead of the dour face of Mrs. Judith Mawson, High-Church enthusiast, who looked with shocked disfavor upon her dissenting lodgers, McConaughy beheld the bluff, ruddy visage of an elderly, stockily built man, whose whole bearing proclaimed "sea-dog," as he opened the door.

"HOW are ye?" boomed the visitor in a quarter-deck voice. "Captain McConaughy, aren't ye? Yes. I lay beside ye in Sydney harbor five—no, maybe 'twas six or seven year ago. Ye had the *William an' Mary*, then. Nay, don't look so glum, man. I've heard o' your misfortune."

"Ye'll be Craven o' the Red Funnel Line—McNish's Red Funnel Line," returned McConaughy, firmly interrupting the other's flow of conversation. "I mind ye now. Ye skippered the *Caerlaverock Castle*."

He shut the door.

"Take a seat," he added. "No, yon's a chair. I'll have the bed. This is Mr. Grant, ma firrst officer, an' Mr. Apgar, ma chief."

Craven shook hands fussily with the two, but neglected the invitation to sit down.

"Glad to meet ye, gentlemen, heard about ye—ay, heard a good deal about ye," he said with a chuckle. Then, turning to McConaughy, again: "Ye have a good memory, captain. But I gave up the *Caerlaverock Castle* two years gone by, now. I'm port superintendent of the line."

"Then congratulations are your due," returned McConaughy. "It's not every masterr that reaches your age, if I may say so, falls into an easy berth like that."

"Ye say well, Captain McConaughy," answered Craven complacently. "They're good people, the Red Funnel Line. Old McNish, himself, was a shipmate o' mine, long afore ye were born, I dare swear. But they're kindly to all alike, seamen, 'prentices, dockmen, clerks and pensioners. It's a good line to work for."

Throughout this dialogue, in which they were not included, Apgar looked at Grant and Grant looked at Apgar. It was patent to both of them that so important a personage as Captain Craven, port superintendent of the Red Funnel Line—McNish's Red Funnel Line, you understand — had not come to visit McConaughy for the mere pleasure of rehearsing past meetings and his own fair treatment at the hands of Fortune.

McConaughy had the same idea, but no trace of it was revealed in his face. He had seated himself on the edge of one of three narrow cots that occupied half the scant space in the room.

"I have heard McNish well-spoken of," he said calmly.

There was no need for him to say anything more, so with that he became silent.

Captain Craven was not at a loss, however. He surveyed the three men before him with a large benevolence.

"The fact o' the matter is," he said, "I did not come here to gab about my own success, but to ask ye to step over to the offices with me, if ye have an hour to spare.

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The matter's by way o' bein' urgent, so I am my own messenger."

"I'll be verry glad to step over with ye," replied McConaughy. "But perrhaps ye do not know the terrms upon which I will ship."

Captain Craven put on his cap and bustled to the door.

"Your whole crew to go with ye?" he cried with the breeziness of a partially tamed hurricane. "Ay, an' if ye'll permit me to say so, captain, I honor your sentiments. They become ye, sir. No, set your fears at rest. The point ye mention will be no stumblin'-block in what we have to discuss. So come your ways along with me."

He opened the door and swung about with a bow and a flourish.

"Your sarvent, gentlemen!" he exclaimed to Grant and Apgar. "Captain McConaughy, I await ye."

McConaughy followed him dumbly, scarce trusting his ears.

"There's no sense o' delay in business," Craven confided to him briskly as they descended the stairs. "That was old McNish's motto, and it's the motto o' the firm today. When we decide to do business, we do it. It's the American idea, they say. I know it pays."

"I believe ye," said McConaughy, with what—for him—was a confession of bewilderment. "But I never thought o' goin' to the Red Funnel Line. Ye have the reputation o' preferrin' to train yer own skippers."

"So we have, so we have," acceded Captain Craven. "This is an unusual step we are takin'—although, to be frank, I should warn ye not to regarrd the transaction as signed and sealed. The objection ye have mentioned will not hold, but the Managin' Director has ideas o' her own."

McConaughy started.

"*Her* own?" he repeated.

"Ay, it's Miss Tabitha we're speakin' of."

"Miss — Miss —Tabitha!" McConaughy stopped in his tracks, gulping hard. "What arre ye takin' me to?" he demanded suddenly with fierce finality.

Craven surveyed him in astonishment.

"Do ye not know, man?" cried the burly port superintendent.

"Know what?" snapped McConaughy.

"About Miss Tabitha."

"How should I?"

Craven shrugged his shoulders in despair.

"If ye don't, I can say no more—except to advise ye not to make any hasty conclusions," he commented dryly. "The gist o' it is that McNish, himself, died last year—as I thought every Belfast man knew—and his daughter succeeded him as Managin' Director o' the Line."

"A woman, a bit lassie, Managin' Director o' the Red Funnel Line!" exclaimed McConaughy. His brows darkened. "If ye're havin' fun wi' me, Captain Craven——"

Craven throttled a snort of merriment with some effort.

"I'll say no more, McConaughy, or I'll be sayin' too much, belike," he answered. "My orders were to bring ye to the Managin' Director—an' I may say for your future benefit that we find it worth while to obey orders in our office."

Nothing more was said during the brief walk across town, and five minutes later McConaughy was staring up at the stately portico of the building which carried, across its front, in tall gilt-and-red lettering the words, "McNish's Red Funnel Line," twined about a rakish red funnel, and underneath "Regular sailings to Scandinavian and Baltic ports—Monthly steamers to Australia, China and the Indies."

Of all the vast enterprises which Belfast boasts, none has brought it more world-wide fame than McNish's Red Funnel Line, the dream of a poor boy who rose from the fo'c's'le of a tea-clipper to become owner of one of the biggest steam-fleets in the Empire. McConaughy, self-reliant Presbyterian egotist and despiser of authority, though he was, suddenly yielded to an impulse to remove his cap as he entered the busy offices and saw fronting him the life-size, phenomenally stiff portrait in oils of the square-jawed old Scotch-Irish shipmaster, himself.

Craven escorted the skipper of the defunct *William and Mary* between shining brass rails to a sanctum behind a plate-glass door, which presented a vista of deep leather armchairs.

"Wait," he directed shortly. "I'll tell Miss Tabitha you're here."

McConaughy was conscious of an inclination toward chaos at the pit of his stomach, but he resolutely mastered it and by unheard-of exertions contrived to present an iron countenance as Craven left him.

The port superintendent's back had no sooner been turned, however, than the redoubtable McConaughy sank into the

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deepest of all the leathern armchairs, utterly crushed and quaking as a schoolboy quakes while waiting on the threshold of punishment.

"A woman," he kept muttering between his teeth. "A wee-bit lassie! Managin' Director—an' me, Miles McConaughy, me! Hecht! Maybe the adverrsitee is goin' to ma head."

II

SOME minutes—they seemed hours to McConaughy — later, Captain Craven reappeared through the farthermost mahogany doorway, crooking his finger.

"She'll see ye now," he vouchsafed.

McConaughy struggled to his feet, too close to panic for comfort.

"But—but—ye'll have given me no worrd o' what the leddy may wish from me," he expostulated. "Could ye not——"

But Craven was merciless, despite a twinkle of humor in his eye.

"I have no authority to speak o' such matters, captain," he answered. "She'll be tellin' ye, herself. Follow me."

Dumbly, wrathfully, torn between contending emotions, McConaughy obeyed, a strong man who felt he had made a misstep but saw no way of retrieving it. He would have given anything at that moment for the ability to withdraw with dignity. Therefore he emerged from the dark corridor into a large, sun-bathed room, hung with innumerable pictures of ships and maps and port-scenes, perspiring profusely and quite reckless of his actions.

He was only dimly aware of the desk that barred his further progress and the figure that rose behind it.

"Captain McConaughy?"

Although a minute before he had decided that he hated Craven, McConaughy turned a desperate glance in search of the man who had lured him to this predicament. But the soft closing of a door was Craven's farewell. He, Miles McConaughy, was left by himself to talk business with a woman, a bit lassie, a——

Suddenly, he looked up and permitted his eyes to sweep obliquely—he was not yet nerved to risk a straightforward gaze—the face of the Managing Director of the Red Funnel Line. He was surprised, pleasantly surprised. Here was no pink-and-white prettiness. Instead, he found himself surveyed by a pair of cool gray eyes set in a rather square frame over a jaw that jutted slightly forward, in striking contrast to the fluffy brown hair that topped the picture. Manlike it was not, but McConaughy had never seen a woman of this type in his life; his path had been far from the paths that the leaders of Feminism have marked out for the world to tread.

"You are Captain McConaughy?" she said again.

"I— Yes, ma'am."

He shifted uncomfortably.

"Sit down, captain."

She pointed to a chair by which he stood, just across the desk from her. McConaughy hesitated a moment, then stumbled into it.

Once more the gray eyes swept him steadily, summarizing; analyzing, probing swiftly beneath the surface. A strange woman, indeed! Under the stimulus of her investigation McConaughy began to be himself again. The self-reliant Presbyterianism of the man, always sufficient unto itself and assured of its own righteousness, came to his rescue.

He raised his eyes to hers. She met his glance as a man would have met it, frankly and easily. He saw now that she was not as old as he had first taken her to be, surely not yet thirty. But the character written broad on her face gave the casual observer an impression of age which was deceptive. Another thing that puzzled him was the absence of hardness he had thought he marked in her features. Her face was square in its lines, but never masculine.

She observed his scrutiny and smiled under it, smiled without any trace of coquetry.

"You seem surprised, Captain McConaughy."

"I am," he assented dryly. "In the firrst place, ma'am, I was not led to expect a leddy in this place. For the rest, I'm not a leddy's man—an' ye are by no means the kind o' leddy I'd have expected to see here. So perhaps ye'll excuse ma lack o' manerrs."

She waved away the apology.

"Your surprise is natural. For the rest, I got you here to talk business, and it's only natural you should wish to look at me. Anyway, I'm used to being looked at."

She paused an instant, as if to give him a chance to take up the conversation, but he set his lips firmly together and sat back in

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the chair. It was never his way to talk when it was not necessary, and, he told himself, he did not intend to break his rule for a lady managing director.

"You'll be wondering why I sent for you?" she continued at last. "Well, the answer to that is that I've been hearing of you. First, I heard that there was a Captain McConaughy here in Belfast who had lost his ship to the enemy and was unwilling to ship again unless he could take his whole crew with him. Then I heard what this Captain McConaughy had done—how he had trapped a German cruiser and sunk it in retaliation for his loss. That interested me. So I called in Captain Craven, who said he knew you, and between us, I don't mind saying, we have conducted a thorough investigation of your record."

"I'm honorred, ma'am," returned McConaughy briefly, seeing that some manner of reply was necessary.

"So, as I know you, captain, after a manner of speaking, it is only fair that you should know me. My father left me this business—or, at least, the controlling interest in it. He always wanted a son, and he brought me up as much like one as he could, though he did not hold by the Cause, I'm sorry to say. So, when he died, I succeeded him. It's a great responsibility, especially in times like these. My father took great pride in the record of his line. He never lost a ship. He had break-downs and fires, and once the *St. Hilda* piled on the sands off the American coast, but in every case the vessels were salvaged. You can imagine my feelings, then, when I tell you I have lost two ships in the last two months."

For the first time, McConaughy looked interested.

"Did ye now?" he interjected. "That's harrd luck, ma'am. 'Tis maself knows how it feels to lose yer own—I had some interest in the *William an' Mary*."

"So I've heard," she said, with a smile. "Now, as ship-owner to ship-owner, Captain McConaughy—" McConaughy was no longer a ship-owner and his share in the old *William* had been a beggarly sixteenth; but he swelled visibly under the compliment—"I put it to you: is not the condition of the seas a crime and a menace to all law-abiding subjects of the Crown?"

"Ma'am, it is," roared McConaughy, with sudden vehemence. "Ye've said it. There'll be no two ways about it. Criminal, it is! An' the insufferable self-suffeeciency o' they English navy-officers! Will ye believe it, the only way I could get permission to attack that Dutch cruiser I sunk was by agreein' that the captain o' the nearest English warship should have the credit for it! If it's the English are to fight this war, ma'am, there'll be but the one end to it an' we might as well make peace, now, as later. It'll be the Ulstermen an' the Scotch an' Welsh that are needed if matthers are to run straight."

"You've left out the Irish?" said Miss McNish, with a smile.

McConaughy glared at her.

"The Irish!" he rasped. "Popish blackguarrds! They're o' the same piece wi' the English—exceptin' only a bit few now an' then, not enough to mention as a generalitee, however."

Miss McNish stretched a large, firm hand across the desk to him.

"We're of one mind on some points," she said crisply. "That I can see already. First and foremost, Captain McConaughy, I'm an Ulsterman—or Ulsterwoman, if you'll have it that way. The last thing I did before war broke out was to run a shipment of fifty thousand rifles, machine guns, artillery and ammunition into the Lough here for the Ulster Volunteers. Down with Home Rule!"

"Ye've said it!" apostrophized McConaughy fiercely. "Hecht, lassie, ye may wearr skirrts, but ye're more o' a man than many I might name."

Miss McNish displayed what looked to be dangerously like a dimple in one corner of her square jaw.

"I'm sure from you that's a great compliment, captain," she acknowledged. "But if you don't mind, we've gotten off the track of our business talk."

"Ye're right, ma'am," he agreed. "But I warrn ye, yon's a subject I can not be starrted on wi' any hope o' peace an' harrmony. Ye were speakin' about the ships ye lost. Two, I think?"

"Yes, two. Submarines!"

His brow clouded at the laconic explanation.

"I've been hearin' about this low-down savagery o' they Dutchmen," he growled. "For maself, I had no complaint. They caught me on the high seas, an' they put ma crew over-side an' blew ma vessel to pieces wi'out unnecessary brutality. But

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this sinkin' unarmed craft wi'out warrnin' —I just can't underrstand it."

"Nor can any of us, Captain McConaughy. My two steamers were sunk precisely as you have said, without any warning. In one case, three men were drowned. It was only by the mercy of Providence that the rest got away. But what has particularly galled me was the fact that the second vessel we lost was the old *Brompton Chine*, my father's first ship and the keystone of the Red Funnel fleet. I could have put up with anything except that."

Her eyes flashed as she spoke, but there was nothing weak about her anger. It blazed with determination like a man's.

"An' what would ye do about it?" he asked.

"Do? I'm going to take matters into my own hands. I've complained to the Admiralty, as has every ship-owner in Belfast, an' nothing yet has happened. So now I'll act for myself."

"The proper spirit!"

McConaughy nodded approvingly.

"This is where you come into my plans," she went on. "It has reached my ears that you are a fearless man, with a fearless crew. If you measure up to my requirements and are willing to do the work, I'll place every facility in your way, and as for money—you can have what you want, in reason. What I'm after is a chance to show these English naval officers that they don't know their own business."

McConaughy considered.

"The idea sounds attractive, I'll not deny, an' I think I can answer for ma men," he responded cautiously. "But ye spoke o' requirements?"

"Yes, and such as they are, I adhere rigidly to them."

He nodded and waited.

"In the first place, are your men proper Christians? I ship no Papists."

"Ulster and Scotch Presbyterians on deck; Welsh Methodists in the Black Gang," he returned with a grin. And more soberly: "I'll have only God-fearin' men underr ma command, ma'am. Psalm-singin' an' a bit o' prayin' are better for discipline than gamin' an' rum."

"They are," she assented, with obvious respect. "But how do you do it? I'd like to have you teach all my captains."

"It's a matther o' belief," he said indifferently. "I'll have no men but conforrm to ma ways. Is that the only requirement?"

"There is one other. Are you for the Cause?"

He drew his brows together.

"The Cause? What Cause would ye be meanin'——"

"The Cause of Woman's Rights, to be sure," she answered, with a trace of impatience. "Haven't you——"

McConaughy settled back into his chair.

"This is new to me," he interrupted judiciously. "Woman's Rights? What might they mean, ma'am? I never knew a woman that went after her rights an' didn't get them."

Miss Tabitha McNish drew herself up with a show of dignity.

"I am referring to the women's campaign for the vote," she replied. "I was the first woman in Belfast to go to jail for the Great Principle—but, of course, that was before my father died. My present position does not permit me to sacrifice myself as I should like to, even if we had not suspended Militancy during the war."

"Ye're gettin' me in deeper an' deeper," protested McConaughy, with a puzzled frown. "Votes for women? Hecht! I never voted maself, come to think o' it. What would ye do wi' 'em, if ye got 'em?"

"What would you do?" she retorted. "We'll get what we want. Do you realize that the only people who can't vote are women, criminals and idiots? Do you think that a woman who heads one of the greatest shipping companies in the Empire—ay, and who earned as big a dividend as was ever passed before in the one year of her management—do you think that she should be classed with the sweepings of the jails and asylums?"

McConaughy watched her with awed astonishment as she approached her peroration and her clinched fist fell upon the desk between them.

"No, indeed, ma'am; no, indeed, I don't," he hastened to placate her. "'Tis a subject I never happened to give thought to, me bein' a poor sailorman, as ye know, an' ma ways bein' far from the ways o' politics an' the worrld's affairs. But I hold fast to a theory that may answer your question: if women want a thing they should have it—for the peace o' the worrld, if for no other reason."

Miss McNish looked at him suspiciously.

"You're in favor of the Cause, then?" she pressed.

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"Heart an' soul, ma'am," McConaughy reassured her, now perceiving clearly the way to satisfy his amazing interrogator.

"That's well," she declared, instantly appeased. "I'm glad to meet a sensible man, Captain McConaughy. And indeed, I don't employ any but sensible men. If a man can't be a Christian and a Friend of Woman, then, I say, he should be cast into outer darkness. Certainly he isn't an Ulsterman."

"Certainly not, ma'am," assented McConaughy heartily.

III

"AN' YE tell me the Red Funnel Line is—is a leddy!" gasped Jock Grant, as McConaughy concluded.

"Even so."

Apgar knocked the ashes out of his pipe into the communal slop-jar and cocked an eye at his comrades across the back of the chair he straddled.

"Hi'm not so sure abaht this Woman's Rights business, skipper," he protested. "Hi 'ave it in me mind, Scripter don't up-'old it."

"Show me chapter and verse," returned McConaughy calmly.

"Ay, Evan mon," urged Grant. "An' would ye fly i' the face o' yer own bread an' butter for a lamshammle question o' Scriptural theologee? Mon, give thocht tae the bonny fechtin' we'll be haein' wi' they Dutch loons—foreby the fact we'll all can stick our fingers tae our noses at the English."

"Materially speakin', Hi can not deny the logic o' yer argument, Jock," responded Apgar belligerently. "But in a matter o' the Spirit—which Hi contend this to be—as a God-fearin' Methodist an' a man who strives 'umbly to foller in the footsteps o' John Wesley an' 'is synted hapostuls, Hi can not just reconcile meself to the establishment o' political equality for wimmin. Look through yer Bible, look through history, for that matter. Where will yer find wimmin preachers, wimmin reformers, wimmin hadministrators? Votes for wimmin! Yah! Babes for wimmin, Hi s'y!"

McConaughy rose carelessly from his seat by the door.

"Evan, man," he said quietly, "I'm not denyin' ye're a grand Methodist, but there are times when ye try ma patience. Ye prate o' woman's rights no' bein' i' the Bible! Look to yer Bible an' find me reference to the power o' steam! But do ye deny the efficacy an' righteousness in the Lord's sight o' reeciprocatin' engines by reason o' the negligence o' some Hebrew historians? Ye do not, Evan Apgar, else ye'd not be the best chief engineer sailin' from Belfast.

"In ma way, I'm as good a Presbyterian as ye be Methodist—ay, an' so's Jock yonder. But ye don't hear us slatherin' like chapel preachers over a question o' indeevidual preference. If the bit lassie wants to vote, let her vote. Let 'em all vote. If Heaven doesna approve, Heaven will take care o' that, don't ye fear. In the meantime, Evan, ye're standin' in the way o' good jobs for other men besides yerself."

"It may be ye're right, skipper," acceded Apgar meekly. "Hi've only testified accordin' to me lights, such as they were, an' Hi 'ope there's no lack o' Christian charity in Evan Apgar. Hi'm alw'ys willin'—ay, glad an' willin'—to stand aside an' sink me own wishes for the good o' the multitood."

"Spoke like a man, Evan," said Captain McConaughy gravely.

He picked up his cap.

"An' now we've got worrk ahead o' us; real worrk to stir a sailorman's hearrt. Miss McNish has offered me the pick o' the Red Funnel fleet. It's for us to say which we prefer. She suggested we look at the *Joan o' Arc;* that's the best o' the lot, not a year out o' Harland & Wolff's."

"The *Joan o' Arc*, did ye say?" inquired Grant, wrinkling up his nose as they emerged into the street and headed for the water-front. "Isna that the name o' some Papist saint?"

"Maybe so," McConaughy agreed dryly. "But ye'll find the other names as outlandish, I'm thinkin', Jock. She's gone an' named the whole fleet after women, many o' them hussies, I should say, by the memory o' what I studied in school. She was tellin' me when she took over the Line she renamed every ship after what she called the great women o' history, exceptin' only an old craft that was her father's firrst command, the *Brompton Chine*—her what was torpedoed the other day. 'Twas the loss o' the *Brompton Chine* put this idea in her head."

"The lassie must hae good in her gin she gies that much thocht tae the mem'ry o'

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her faither," commented Jock Grant, the big-hearted.

"She's no a bad sorrt," answered McConaughy briefly.

There was a pause as they strode along.

"Hi hassume from yer words the lydey is still blessed wi' youth," said Apgar.

McConaughy deliberated conscientiously.

"Well," he said at last, "she's no very old, Evan man, but I'd harrdly call her youthfu'."

"She's perrsonable, I tak' it," suggested Grant.

McConaughy stopped dead in his tracks.

"Would ye now?" he roared. "D'ye think ye can pump me like a pair o' old maids dodderin' i' the back-garden over their tea? Pull away, the two o' ye. Hecht! I wasna borrn yesterda'. Ye'll see the leddy in a few minutes, an' ye can then forrm ye're own estimates o' her female beauty."

And during the rest of the walk to the Red Funnel Line docks McConaughy pointedly refrained from conversation, although his two officers, with several sly winks, took pains that there should be plenty of opportunities for him.

At the dock gates they met Captain Craven, who escorted them to a comfortable office inside where the mistress of the Line awaited them. She rose when the party entered and shook hands cordially with Grant and Apgar, as McConaughy introduced them.

"And this is Mr. Grant who fired the torpedo that sunk the *Unser Fritz?*" she exclaimed as her hand was buried in the huge paw of the First Officer of the departed *William and Mary.* "We're going to give you plenty of chances at the Germans, in the near future, Mr. Grant. Oh, and Mr. Apgar! I've heard about your engine-room records, Mr. Apgar. If you do all that is attributed to you, I shall be having you start a school of instruction for the other chiefs of the Line."

Grant and Apgar murmured bashful deprecations and retired to the background. Talking was not their long suit in the circumstances.

"A braw fine lassie," rumbled Jock in a hoarse whisper, when he deemed himself safe out of range, Miss McNish having led Captain McConaughy to a window whence he might survey the serried files of Red-Funnel steamers drawn up in the slip below.

"Ay, ye're right, lad," assented Apgar. "Beyond the foolish age, too. She puts me in mind o' the pastor's wife at Plyddhwyd-Fydder; she—it's the parson's wife hi'm tellin' ye of—was a schoolmarm. Well-favored, she were, but she 'ad a w'y abaht 'er."

IN THE meantime, over by the window, Miss McNish had drawn McConaughy's admiring attention to a splendid hull lying directly beneath them.

"There's the *Joan,*" she said. "Here, next to the *Emma Willard.* How would she do? You'll find no better craft in Belfast, Captain McConaughy. She's all but brand-new—one Suez voyage and a run to Chile. If your chief is as good as you say, he can get sixteen knots out of her engines."

But McConaughy shook his head.

"No, ma'am," he said slowly. "It goes against ma inclination as a skipper wi' a love for fine ships, but I wouldna have the hearrt to take that beauty out on such a mission. She's worrth all o' a hun'erd thousan' pounds as she lies there. 'Twould be sinfu', riskin' the likes o' her. Mind ye, if the plan I foller is the one I'm turrnin' over in ma mind, 'twill not be the fast ship or the big ship I'll need, but some ordinary, dumpy, fat-bowed little tramp like any other Baltic freighter that might be put on the Archangel run. An' there's ma choice now."

He leveled his finger at a salt-rusted, hump-backed, dingy, three-hundred-foot cargo-carrier that lay on the opposite side of the slip.

"What?" exclaimed the Managing Director of the Red Funnel Line. "The *Emmaline Pankhurst?* Why, she's the oldest old thing we've got. I don't believe you could force her boilers beyond eight knots with a following wind."

"And what more would we ask?" responded McConaughy cheerfully. "I must be sure the slowest submarine can run circles round me. He'll be the less likely to blow me out o' the water wi'out givin' me chance to accomplish ma plan."

"And what might your plan be, Captain McConaughy?" asked Miss McNish, with no little curiosity.

"If ye don't mind, ma'am, I'd rather wait for that until afther we've been over the—what d'ye call her?—the *Emmaline*

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Pankhurst. There's some things— But we have yer permission to go?"

"Yes, indeed, and I'll come with you."

As good as her word, she escorted them around the pier-head and up the gangplank that led to the *Emmaline Pankhurst's* forward deck, at present cluttered up with spare ropes, disjointed machinery and lumber of many unpleasant sorts. McConaughy and his assistants were none too pleased at the idea of having a lady accompany them on the painstaking tour of inspection they had promised themselves; but their distaste soon wore away.

Miss McNish was able to go anywhere that they went; she made nothing of dirt and grease, wiping her hands nonchalantly on the same ball of waste that served for them; and when they wanted information it tripped pat from the end of her tongue.

Down companionways and ill-lit, slippery, iron-runged ladders into the nethermost stoke-holds she guided them, and it was she who suggested personal investigation of the screw-shaft, a journey which led them into the ultimate bowels of the ship, where the months'-old bilge-water stunk with a peculiar stink that rivaled the stale smell of half-baked, wholly-degenerate lubricants which abounded in the surrounding regions.

It was long after twilight when they reached the deck again, and at McConaughy's suggestion, ascended the ladder to the bridge for a look at the chart-house and a general survey of the lay of the deck-space and superstructure. Miss McNish's oilers were filthy, a wisp of dank hair lay across one cheek and a huge smudge of grease was daubed over half the other and her nose as well. But she was wholly unconscious of it, and so easy was her manner that the three men with her talked as unrestrainedly as if she had been one of themselves in fact.

"I'll have my dock-yard people look over the engines, Mr. Apgar," she said. "I think you're right; that starboard cylinder-packing needs attention. And some of those fire-grates are rusted. To tell the truth, the *Emmaline* is pigged-up worse than I thought. She's a cranky ship — went aground once, and cost almost as much as she was worth to pull off. We haven't used her much. I'll have the fo'c's'le painted, too, Mr. Grant and of course, the officers' quarters. Now, what about the steering-gear, Captain McConaughy?"

"I have but the one bit of advice to give to ye," he cautioned. "Do not be spendin' more money than necessary on her. Leave the steerin'-gear as it is, wi' such improvements as will let us follow a course. That's enough. No fancy things."

"You're right," she assented. "But so long as you and your men are going into danger, I want you to be comfortable and well-provided for. You spoke of a plan. Do you care to——"

"Yes, ma'am. Will ye step out here?"

He led the way from the chart-house to one corner of the bridge. Apgar watched them a moment with bated breath, then turned to Grant, who was twisting the wheel-spokes, in an attempt to find out what was wrong with the port rudder-chains.

"Jock," he said earnestly. "Hi want to tyke back wot hi said abaht this 'ere votes for wimmin. If hi 'ad any sort o' vote hi'd give it to that lydy. Why, Jock, she ain't no lydy. She's a man, Jock; she's just as much o' a man as pants an' whiskers could myke 'er."

IV

McCONAUGHY vetoed the idea of turning over the *Emmaline Pankhurst* to the dockyard gangs. What repair work was necessary could be done easily by his own men, he told Miss McNish. And the morning after their tour of inspection the famous psalm-singing, divinity-erudite crew of the late *William and Mary* poured up from the various water-front hostels where they had sought shelter and took bodily possession of their new craft.

To the whining notes of a Methodist camp-meeting hymn, Evan Apgar led his diminutive Welsh oilers, machinists and stokers into the engine-room, whence there soon issued a clanking of hammers and clashing of spanners that well-nigh drowned the nasal voices of the singers.

'Tween-decks Jock Grant set his deck-crew to cleaning ship. Useless lumber was rooted out, dirt was hunted down with ruthless energy, paint was imported in copious quantities, and in twenty-four hours the down-at-heels *Emmaline* looked a different vessel. Her hull and upper works, which were water-tight, they left untouched. It was no part of McConaughy's strategy to take out a smart-looking craft. But her

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inwards they made at least livable, and the cockroaches scuttled overboard in dismay. Next day the coal-lighters came alongside, and while the more technically expert of Apgar's men still toiled with him over his decrepit engines, the stokers filled the bunkers.

In commercial circles it was given out that the *Emmaline* was scheduled for a rush trip to Archangel. She was to go in ballast, it was said, and must start in time to take advantage of a thaw in the White Sea, which had enabled the ice-breakers to smash a channel. This explained the haste in making her ready. McConaughy drove his men night and day. As they worked, the stores were brought aboard and stowed whenever opportunity arose. Everything was open and aboveboard.

McConaughy was not so well-known then as he became later during the war, and his employment by the Red Funnel Line created no more than a passing interest among shipping men, who recalled him as a peculiar fellow, with odd ideas, but a unique crew and an ability for doing things.

His plans he confided to nobody save his employer. Not even Apgar and Grant were taken into his confidence. All the crew knew was that they had a ship once more and that there was a vague understanding they were to have a chance in the near future to "strike for the Lord and Gideon," as Apgar put it. They had no more idea than did the drivers of the motor-trucks who brought them to the dock what was contained in the three big packing-cases that were deposited at the gangway the night before the *Emmaline* was due to sail. The only people who did know were McConaughy and the Managing Director.

Miss McNish, herself, came aboard as the crew were standing by the hawsers ready to cast off.

"Here comes your tug, captain," she announced cheerfully, as she shook hands with McConaughy and nodded brightly to Grant, who, very stiff and solemn in a new uniform and cap, with the house-flag of the Red Funnel Line emblazoned on the peak, stood on the bridge, waiting to con the ship out of the slip.

While she was speaking, the tug steamed up to the bow of the *Emmaline*, and with an exultant toot, received the hawser by which she was to pull the larger vessel around into the fairway.

"Yes, ma'am," answered McConaughy. "And we're all ready for her. There's not a thing to wait for."

"Except me," she answered, laughing. "Ah, how I wish I was going with you."

"Ye'll be just as well, I'm thinkin', here on dry land," returned McConaughy grimly. Then, seeing the look of anxiety that flitted across her face, he added quickly: "Not that I've any doubts as to what's goin' to happen. I know ma men, ma'am, an' I think I can do wi' the ship—for all she's not much to look at."

"The — packages — came all right last night?"

"All right, and they're stowed in the officers' quarters under the chart-house. We can get at them in a moment, whenever we need them."

She glanced up at the bare pole-masts.

"I almost wish you had wireless, captain."

"I don't," he retorted decidedly. "Knowin' that we can't signal for help, the Dutchmen will be all the more likely to give us time."

Miss McNish nodded thoughtfully.

"Captain," she said abruptly, "I want you to promise me something. If the danger should appear to be very great—greater, perhaps, than you have anticipated—do not try to put your plan into execution. You can always take to the boats and trust to being picked up."

"Never you fear for us, ma'am," he answered. "We're used to lookin' after ourselves—and we'll be goin' into this wi' our eyes open. If other ships were manned the same way things would be different. I'm thinkin' that anyhow ye'll see an end to this submarine bugaboo before long. Even the English will perrceive the needs o' the occasion some day."

"I hope so. And now remember. The submarine you are to look out for patrols a regular beat off the Mull of Oa on Islay. She runs down channel quite a ways and sometimes cruises well to the north and westward to watch for steamers from the States for Glasgow, by the northern trans-Atlantic route. She was the one that sank the *Brompton Chine*—and she's the one I want you to get, if possible."

"Very good, ma'am," replied McConaughy, who had had his instructions by heart two days before.

The Managing Director gathered her

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skirts together and paused irresolutely by the gangplank, which a squad of stevedores were waiting to haul in. The important little tug lay alongside, with the hawser rove to her towing-bitts; Jock Grant stood on the bridge, ready to give the word, and the slip was empty of small traffic.

Miss McNish started to say something, thought better of it, and put her hand on the gangplank railing to descend. Suddenly she turned and thrust out her hand.

"The plain truth of the matter is, Captain McConaughy," she said, with a break in her voice, "I'm a woman, as well as a Managing Director with a desire for vengeance, and it goes against the grain for me to see brave men going out to risk death at my bidding."

A kindly light flickered in McConaughy's eyes as he gave her slim hand a squeeze in his thick, horny fingers.

"Do not be fashin' yerself about this bit matther, ma'am," he adjured. "In three days, maybe less, ye'll be seein' us back in Belfast—an' think o' the pleasure we'll all be havin' wi' the discomfiture of o' they stuck-up English navy officers."

"I'll try to think of that. But remember—no recklessness."

With a final nod, she was gone. The stevedores hauled away with a "Ya-ha-ho-hay-pull!" and the gangplank swung in to the pier.

McConaughy looked up to the bridge.

"Very well, Mr. Grant; ye may take her out, now," he said.

Mr. Grant rang the engine-room telegraph and then roared an order to the tugboat. Simultaneously the bow and sternlines were cast off and the *Emmaline* began to execute a clumsy circle toward the slipmouth. With a casual glance around to assure himself that everything was going right, McConaughy betook himself to the engine-room hatchway, where he had spied the towsled black head of his Chief Engineer.

Mr. Apgar's mind was not occupied with the immediate present, however, it appeared. He had no eye for his skipper. Rather, his gaze was fastened upon a diminishing figure on the pier.

"Arre ye gone daft, Evan?" demanded McConaughy indignantly.

Mr. Apgar gave his attention with a start.

"Oh! Hi arsks yer pardon, sir," he said. "Hi couldn't tyke me heyes orff 'er." He sighed sentimentally. "Think o' 'er tykin' that much interest in us poor blokes! Hi never saw hany other howner 'ud do that. Votes for Wimmin, Hi s'y—if so be we can get any more like 'er."

McConaughy snorted.

"Suppose, then, you give the leddy some o' your valuable time, Mr. Apgar. She's payin' ye for it."

"Hi'm 'ere, sir," returned Mr. Apgar reproachfully, as he wrenched his eyes from the pier.

"Ay, so I see. Now, can yer first-assistant carry on for a few minutes?"

"Right-o, sir. Hi'll just tip 'im the wink."

The chief disappeared for an instant, shouted something down the hatch and climbed up again.

"COME to my cabin," ordered McConaughy briefly.

In the Skipper's sanctum under the bridge, McConaughy drew two chairs to a desk and pointed to a drawing which lay thereon.

"D'ye see this, Evan man?"

"Ay? What is it? A trap-door?"

"Ye're not far wrong. 'Tis the horizontal section o' the cover o' a submarine's hatchway. In case ye don't know it, Evan, we're afther submarines this voyage. Now, what I want ye to do is to rig up for me a heavy balk o' timber, wi' screw-jacks set in each end, that I can clap across the open top o' a submarine's hatch-combing an' clamp into place, so that the cover canna be fastened."

"It can be done, skipper. Hi can turn it hout for ye in an 'our," acceded Apgar wonderingly. "But w'y——"

"Can not ye see? Wi' a conthrivance such as I outline to ye, 'twill be impossible for the men in the submarine to shut the hatch-cover, an' wi' the cover open they dare not submerge, for if they did the wather would pour in on them and they'd sink."

Apgar brought his fist down upon the desk with a thundering smash.

"True! Trust ye to 'it on the right dodge, Skipper. But 'ow in time are ye gahn to get aboard a submarine to work it?"

McConaughy waved to the packing-cases piled in the officers' mess outside.

"There's an ample supply of automatics, ammunition and hangers. If seamen can't

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use them nowadays, then they're unworthy sons o' their ancesthors."

"But, skipper!" Apgar was aghast. "Would ye attack a submarine wi' pistols an' hangers? An' what would they be doin' with their torpeders?"

"Strategy, Evan, strategy," answered McConaughy with the nearest approach he could muster to a smile. "Ye'll see. Now do what I bid ye, for there's no knowin' how soon we'll be wantin' it. I must be off to give Jock Grant some instructions."

Captain McConaughy climbed the bridge to find the tug casting-off, and the *Emmaline* with way already on her. Mr. Grant, standing by the quartermaster at the wheel, was conning her slowly into the riffle of traffic on the placid waters of the Lough. McConaughy cast an unconscious eye around to make sure all was as it should be, then summoned a junior officer to take Grant's place, and pushed the big Scotchman into a far corner of the bridge.

"D'ye suspect what we're afther, Jock?" he asked.

"Na," said Grant calmly. "Save that it maun be a game worth the candle if ye an' that bit lassie back yon hae thocht it oot."

"Submarines, Jock! W're afther submarines—I might better say, *a* submarine—or any submarine, at all—for the matther o' that. Ye may notice we carry but two boats on the davits. I want ye to see to it they're both ready to drop in the wather at a moment's notice."

Unlike Apgar, Jock Grant did not ask any questions. If McConaughy had planned a thing, that was enough. He was prepared to proceed and do his share of it, without any details other than the Skipper cared to impart.

The *Emmaline* took a naval pilot aboard for the passage through the mine-fields, but dropped him outside. There was a slight head-wind blowing and a lumpy sea running. The sky was dull gray and smothery, and the old *Emmaline* promptly proceeded to demonstrate her true qualities by digging her nose down deep and wallowing along like an over-fed hippopotamus. McConaughy held to the bridge-railing and watched her performance with fascination.

"Hecht!" he murmured. "They didna give her a wrong reputation."

With it all, however, she revealed a plugging persistence that earned grudging admiration in view of her manifest unseaworthiness. Every sea she could take aboard, though, landed with generous wetness on the fo'c's'le and splashed aft to the engine-room ventilators. Finally, they put up the bridge-screens to protect the watch at the wheel as much as possible.

It was well into the afternoon, and the Irish hills were still abeam, when a saucy little destroyer ran up alongside, tossing the short waves apart before her knife-bow like a spoon dashed through gravy.

"——!" muttered McConaughy between his teeth. "Can the English never leave us alone?"

"What ship is that?" hailed an officer on the destroyer's bridge through a megaphone.

"*Emmaline Pankhurst* — Belfast — for Archangel—in ballast," McConaughy bellowed back.

"Show your private signals," ordered the officer.

McConaughy drew out the secret orders, with which he had been provided by the naval authorities of the port before leaving, and ordered a quartermaster to hoist a string of code signals.

"All correct," shouted the officer. "Just wanted to make sure you deserved help. There are some alleged neutrals perambulatin' 'round the Irish Sea that we'd like to steer into the mines. Now, for your own good— Submarines are reported by wireless to be operatin' off Islay. All shipping is warned to make for nearby ports. Follow us, and we'll escort you in to Portrush."

McConaughy swore with a fluency that surprised even Jock Grant and drew looks of deep respect from the man at the wheel. Although a praying seaman and a disputatious Presbyterian, McConaughy conceived that oaths had their predestined place in the mundane universe, and he used them at need with the thoroughness upon which he prided himself in everything.

"I do not want yer escorrt," he roared back.

"What? What's that?" The destroyer slipped up nearer. There came an audible chuckle from her decks. "I say, friend, what speed have you got?"

"Maybe six knots in this wind," acknowledged McConaughy.

"And the U-boats do sixteen, wind or no wind. You ought to be on your knees sayin' prayers for the Admiralty that sent

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us to look out for you. But there's no satisfyin' you Irish."

McConaughy waxed purple in the face.

"Irish!" he spat with a shiver. "Irish!"

There was a pause. The destroyer forged slightly ahead at reduced speed.

"Well, do we follow him?" questioned Mr. Grant nervously.

"Follow him!" McConaughy choked. "What else can we do? Like as not the scoundrel 'ud suspect something and arrest us if we refused. Can ye beat the English? For wrong-headedness, self-suffeeciency an' —But what's the use?" He broke off. "What's that? He's settin' signals for us. I suppose that officer man wore his voice out talkin' so much."

With a sardonic laugh, McConaughy picked up his glasses and began to read the international code flags.

"Shall — burn — single — red — light — stern — after — dark — You — will — not — show — any — light."

"An' at that, we've got him, the silly fool!" grated the *Emmaline's* commander. "We'll never be near a porrt on this coast until long afther darrk, an' if I don't give him the slip in the meantime, I'm an Englishman!" He rang the engine-room telegraph for reduced speed. "Mr. Grant," he resumed pleasantly, "the sea's breakin' choppier an' we're havin' engine-throuble if our offeecious friend should inquire."

The dark came rapidly on that gray day. There was no sunset, only a blurring of half-seen objects, the dimming of the wave-froth. The destroyer tossed a quarter of a mile ahead of them, like a huge playful whale, sometimes half-obscured by a wave larger than ordinary. Presently, a red lamp was lowered over her stem, and she swung in closer toward the Irish coast. In half an hour the red lamp was the only mark of her presence, and thanks to the skilful way in which Apgar was throttling down his engines, the destroyer was gaining distance, hand-over-fist, on the clumsy *Emmaline*. At half-past eight o'clock McConaughy drew a breath of relief.

"Now!" he exclaimed.

And the helm was put hard over, so that the *Emmaline* careered wildly across the bouncing head-seas that broke in a whitish-gray tangle of foam high above the bows. The red light on the destroyer's stern dwindled and finally faded altogether. The *Emmaline* was alone.

McConaughy was not an imaginative man, but there was something singularly impressive about that wave-swept, wind-ravished darkness. Somewhere, five or six miles to the northwest, the destroyer labored her powerful engines. Ahead lurked the hidden menace of the submarines. Astern lay Belfast, safe behind its mine-fields, forts and guard-boats, living a conventional life even in wartime.

For the submarines he had no fear, but there came to him suddenly the omnipresent dread that is at the heart of every master who sails blind—and he shuddered, involuntarily giving voice to the grisly thought.

"I do not like this pit-mirrk," he growled to Mr. Grant. "There's always the chance we might run into some Glasga' boat or a dreadnaught on a picnic."

"Ay," responded the Scotchman phlegmatically, "but steamin' wi'oot lichts is nae mair risky nor navigatin' in a fog."

V

MORNING found the *Emmaline* plowing a placid sea. The wind had blown itself out; the waves had moderated.

"A splendid day for submarine-work, Mr. Apgar," exclaimed Captain Mc-Conaughy upon meeting his Chief Engineer at early breakfast.

"Ye do seem to tyke a professional interest in their success, Skipper," rejoined Mr. Apgar glumly.

"An' so will ye, Evan man, so will ye," retorted McConaughy.

After breakfast, the packing-cases in the officers' mess were broken out, and an automatic, with ammunition, and a hanger were furnished to each member of the crew. The contrivance which Apgar had arranged overnight for wedging up a submarine's hatch was carefully explained to big Jock Grant and then secreted in the bottom of one of the two life-boats which hung outboard, suspended from the davits, all ready to drop into the water. Acting under additional orders, Apgar also secured all the fire-hose on the ship, coupled it together and attached it to the steam-pump.

In the meantime, McConaughy posted extra lookouts as they cleared the Mull of Oa and bore up for the outer Hebrides, with the Irish coast far astern. The seas

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were deserted, sure proof that the watchful couriers of the Admiralty had scoured off all the helpless prey that they could reach to warn of the submarine danger. There was no land in sight. Except for a few gulls and porpoises the *Emmaline* had seen nothing living since she parted company with the diligent destroyer the night before.

So hour after hour slipped by, until it was almost noon, and McConaughy began to be worried. He strode from end to end of the bridge, a restless eye on the compass and the surrounding waters.

"Unless we flush something pretty soon, we'll have to be turrnin' back, Mr. Grant," he remarked at last, with obvious dissatisfaction.

On the heels of his words came an excited hail from the fo'c's'le head.

"Where? Where away?" answered McConaughy, himself, straining over the bridge-screens.

"On the starboard beam, sir," shouted the man.

McConaughy followed the sailor's pointing finger, and sure enough, there, fully a mile to the right of the course they were pursuing and about parallel with the *Emmaline* at the moment, a long sheeny bulk was rising out of the crisp wavelets, lifting itself from the depths with the ponderous ease of a sinister antediluvian sea-monster. Amidships of its dripping length rode a pair of long antennæ, which were periscopes, the eyes it saw through, and just back of them was a cylindrical projection which was the conning-tower.

While McConaughy watched through his glasses, the top of the conning-tower opened and several men climbed out upon the wet deck of the submarine, clutching to life-lines which were strung along either side on light stanchions. These men made their way forward to the end of the narrow deck-space, where one of them stooped and seemed to be busied with something at his feet. Evidently he released some powerful spring, for a portion of the deck slid away, and automatically a long, slender-barreled three-inch gun rose up in the exposed place.

Other sailors had swarmed out of the conning-tower, carrying ammunition, and within five minutes of the look-out's hail a dull boom echoed across the water and a shell burst just ahead of the *Emmaline*.

"That'll mean 'heave-to,'" commented McConaughy, with a sardonic grin, as he pushed the speed-indicator on the engine-room-telegraph over to "Stop."

The *Emmaline* had been making barely six knots before this, and she came to a full stop without any hesitation. The submarine, however, had put on speed, apparently not being willing to take any chances, and dashed up at a great pace, a fine bone in her teeth.

"All o' sixteen knots," muttered Evan Apgar, who had come on deck to watch the spectacle. "There's good engines in 'er."

"You'll be havin' a look at 'em before long, Evan," said McConaughy.

"Hi 'opes so, Skipper, Hi 'opes so."

"Ye might be goin' to a funeral, man, instead o' a parr-rty. Stand by wi' yer hose. Have no fearr; we'll fool the Dutchmen."

McConaughy turned to the First Officer.

"Mr. Grant, pass the worrd among the men to be careful not to show their arrms. The hangers should be concealed in trousers-legs; the pistols kept in their pockets. Tell off the crews to go in the boats with us. I'll take the second boat, ye'll take the firrst."

As casually as if he were walking over to speak to a friendly shipmaster, McConaughy strolled to the starboard wing of the bridge and awaited the summons of the submarine's commander, as the hostile craft slowed up abeam of the *Emmaline*, her disappearing-gun trained full on the steamer's vitals. The German captain was dressed exactly like his men, in greasy dungarees, but McConaughy distinguished him instantly by his cap and the medals pinned on his filthy jacket, conspicuous among them the Iron Cross.

"Hullo, mein friendt, vat ship vas you?" called the German pleasantly.

McConaughy told him.

"So?" The German showed his teeth in a perfectly friendly smile that contained a hint of derision. "Vell, we save you a long voyage, eh? You get oudt your boats, unt go to the nearest port. Your ship we blow up."

McConaughy simulated intense distress.

"Blow up the old *Emmaline!*" he exclaimed, almost in tears. "Sure, ye can let us go. She's such an old ship. She——"

The smile left the German's face.

"Sir, this is war," he said sternly. "Vat I am about to do, you would do if you were in my place." He cast a look about the

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vacant horizon. "Because there is no other shipping in sight, I gif you half an hour to get your men over-side. At the end of that time I begin to fire. You had best hurry."

McConaughy choked—but not with the kind of emotion the submarine commander suspected.

"Very good, sir," he said submissively.

Mr. Grant had told off the men to go in the two boats. McConaughy's, which was on the port side, was lowered first so that he would have time to pull around before Grant's boat was in the water.

"Have your guns ready," McConaughy hissed to his men, as they cleared the *Emmaline's* stern and made for the submarine. "Shoot for the gun-crew. Remember, they mustn't have a chance to fire."

The two crews rowed leisurely toward the submarine.

"I can't take you on board," called the German captain as they drew nearer. "I'm sorry. You haf to shift for yourselves."

"But, see here," answered McConaughy. "We've only got these two boats. What about the rest of my men? Can they have time to build a raft or something?"

"Impossible!" The German straightened up. "I told you half an hour, unt half an hour you shall haf. No more."

"But—but we'll be terribly crowded in two boats."

"I can not help that. It is the fault of your owners; they should know better."

During this conversation, McConaughy had maneuvered his boats steadily closer to the submarine.

"Well, at least, can't you give us some brandy or spirits?" he temporized. "I don't carry any on ma ship, and we'll need some if we've got to set out for land in our overcrowded condition at this time of year."

"That I'll be glad to do," said the submarine commander. "Come over, unt I vill hand you vat you need."

He turned to the conning-tower and shouted something down the hatch.

"Our chance!" murmured McConaughy in a strident whisper. "Fire!"

Crack! Crack! Crack! The automatics bit the silence. The three Germans clustered about the gun-breech tumbled over, riddled with bullets; the submarine commander sank beside the conning-tower, with a bullet through his thigh; McConaughy, himself, carefully shot away the periscopes.

"Give way, all!" he roared. "Now, Jock, the hatch, man! Quick! Before they close it!"

In answer to his appeal, huge Jock Grant took a flying leap from his seat in the stern of the first life-boat and landed on all-fours on the submarine's slippery deck, just as the German captain, dripping blood from his injured leg, had struggled to his feet and was desperately trying to close the hatch. Grant swept the German backward with a single blow, and jammed the heavy balk of timber Apgar had prepared across the opening in time to prevent several frenzied hands from closing it from inside.

In a trice the giant Scotchman had screwed the jacks fast at either end, and it was impossible to make that particular submarine water-tight.

Another group of Germans, aft of the conning-tower, likewise had shown a disposition to fight, but they were quickly cowed into submission by the hangers and pistol-butts of the *Emmaline's* men. Once he had gained the submarine's deck, McConaughy shouted to the bridge of his own ship to start the engines and swing around to the other side of the submarine, lest some of the Germans below should try to torpedo her in revenge. But the under-sea boat's crew were far too frightened by this utterly unlooked-for turn of affairs to have any thought of such desperate measures. With the smashing of the periscopes, moreover, their only means of vision had been taken from them. They could not be sure where the *Emmaline* lay.

After stationing a strong guard around the conning-tower, with orders to shoot at the first threat of a sortie, McConaughy directed the clearing-up of the limited deck-space of his prize. The wounded captain and his unhurt prisoners, five in number, he put aboard one of his life-boats and sent back to the steamer.

"Three dead, six captured," he observed. "That's nine out of the way. There can't be more nor twenty below yet. Well, we'll have to argue it out wi' 'em."

He hailed the *Emmaline*.

"Come up closer," he ordered. "Lower the fire-hose overr-side, an' tell Mr. Apgar to put on full pressure. We've got to bring these fellows to terr-rms. They'll be thryin' to run away wi' us, if we don't."

The fire-hose was duly lowered to the submarine's deck, and McConaughy, himself, trained the nozzle through the open hatch.

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"Is there one o' ye below can speak English?" he shouted.

Followed an intense commotion, and at last a feeble answer in the affirmative.

"Then here are ma terms for ye. Surrrender, an' yer lives will be spared. Rresist me—an' I'll fill ye so full o' water ye'll sink in five minutes."

This ultimatum inspired a frenzied discussion, loud argument, evident physical combat, and finally an announcement that the majority had overpowered the few who sided with their officers in advocating death to the humility of surrender to a merchantman's crew.

"Humph!" grunted McConaughy, when he had extracted from the timorous interpreter below the reasons why certain of the Germans preferred death to yielding. "Ye can tell yer stubborrn friends—an' I admirre men o' their brreed, I'll say that for 'em— that we're in no sense askin' to be classed wi' the English navy. We hold by ourselves, to speak the soberr truth, young man. We have much the same opeenion o' them ye may enjoy yerselves. Now, if ye're ready for surrenderin', come up, one at a time. We'll take care o' the rest."

VI

"WHAT hae ye got there, sir?" inquired Jock Grant, as McConaughy descended the Jacob's-ladder which hung from the *Emmaline's* rail to the deck of the submarine.

McConaughy shook out the folds of bunting by way of reply.

"We'll be all above-board," he said. "I've had ma lesson o' the manners o' the English Navy. The credit for this is ours, and ours it shall remain. I'll be havin' no snip o' a young officerr thryin' to gain promotion on our worrk. We'll put our brand on it, eh? The Red Hand o' Ulster."

The bunting he exposed to the delighted gaze of that portion of his crew assembled on the submarine around him or lining the rail above was the banner of the Ulster Covenant, the Red Hand on a white field that had waved above the serried thousands of the Volunteers who swore their violent opposition to Home Rule. A ragged cheer went up at sight of the flag that had not been seen in Belfast since the war began.

Grant, for all his Scots blood, grinned ready appreciation.

"But we should be haein' the Dutch flag underneath the bonnie banner," he suggested. "That's the proper fashion."

"So it is," McConaughy agreed. "Drop down the hatch, Jock, man, an' see what ye can find in the fellow's signal-locker, if he has such a thing."

Cautiously, as became his bulk, Jock lowered his gigantic body down the scanty hatchway, and presently, with a snort of triumph, he was back again, an Imperial German Navy ensign trailing behind him.

" 'Tis a strange place below, Skipper," he observed, "but on a sma' scale, d'ye ken, they hae most o' the necessitees."

"That's fine, Jock," exclaimed McConaughy, overjoyed. "We'll hoist 'em right away."

He led the way aft to where a metal jackstaff projected over the downward-slanting stern of the whale-like craft, and to the peak he slowly hoisted the two flags, first the banner of the Ulster Covenant, with its Red Hand spread sinisterwise, and then the dark-striped German flag, seeming to cower and slink its folds under that persistent threat. McConaughy stood back, hands upon his hips, to admire his job.

"It looks well," he remarked with satisfaction. "I'm pleased wi' that, Jock, mighty well pleased. An' now we'll be gettin' under way. Anybody we meet won't be in doubt how matthers stand, will they?"

"Sma' chance, sir," assented Mr. Grant.

McConaughy moved toward the Jacob's-ladder, taking a last look around him as he walked.

"An' how many men d'ye think ye'll need?" he asked suddenly.

Mr. Grant looked as startled as he felt.

"What for do I want men?"

"Well, ye'd scarce like to handle the prize by yerself, Jock," returned his captain.

"Who? Me? Skipper, are ye daft? Would ye put me i' the bowels o' this hellcraft?"

McConaughy paused with one hand on the ladder.

"Well, ye said they had most o' the necessitees below."

"Ay, but on a sma' scale, I said, sir. On a sma' scale, ye ken, an' I'm an unco' larrge mon, Skipper. Why, if I'm gaun through thae bit passages below, I maun move sideways, an' at that, the back o' ma pants is a' grease."

"Hecht, Jock!" returned McConaughy,

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with a frown. "Would ye be makin' all this fuss before the crew? We can not tow the thing, handless. She'll be dead-weight enough, wi' a man at the wheel, an' somebody to stand by in case o' danger."

"But I dinna ken her machines," pleaded Grant frantically. "If ye'd been below, sir, ye'd apreeciate what I'm sayin'. She's naethin' but machinery, frae bow tae sterrn—all manner o' whirligigs, an' spinnin' wheels, an' they motor-things, an' stop-cocks, an' rods a-blingin' in an' oot. 'Tis nae job for me. Evan micht hae more o' a gift for it than me; he kens machines."

McConaughy nodded his head slowly.

"Maybe there's somethin' in what ye say, Jock. I'll send Evan down."

But it required almost as much persuading to induce Mr. Apgar to assume charge of the prize.

"Wot? Me ride in that blighted tin intyke valve?" he protested. "Hi'm too good a man for ye to lose, Skipper. Ye'll 'ave call for me services sometime again."

"That'll do, Mr. Apgar," replied McConaughy in his quarter-deck manner that his officers seldom saw. "Somebody's got to do it, an' as Mr. Grant pointed out, that somebody must know machines. Ye'll have five men, an' I'll throw in the boatswain besides to look after the navigatin' for ye. Now, be quick. I'm anxious to get away from here. We'll have slow worrk, towin' the prize from here to Belfast."

To tell the truth, Apgar recovered from his dismay as soon as he saw the inside of the submarine. He was too much of a natural-born mechanic not to exult over the chance for exploration and study of new things.

Long before the towing-cable had been made fast and the submarine dropped astern of the *Emmaline*, he was immersed in her vitals, oil-can in one hand, portable, wire-bracketed electric lamp in the other, prying here and there among the intricate maze of motors and special machinery.

Late in the afternoon he climbed up the narrow companionway to the tiny bridge, where the helmsman stood, endeavoring to keep the submarine's nose true on the course the *Emmaline* was following.

"She's doin' four knots, no more," he appraised the thrust of his own formerly beloved engines.

Then, without another word, he plunged below. Followed much clanking and purring of machinery, and without warning the man at the wheel felt a quiver running through the frail hull beneath him. The submarine was moving ahead, propelled by her own engines! To his amazement he found himself creeping up on the *Emmaline*, and he was obliged to steer to one side to avoid a collision. His frenzied shouts brought McConaughy leaping toward the steamer's stern, just as Mr. Apgar's face, sweaty and oil-streaked, emerged from the conning-tower hatch.

"What mad tricks arre ye up to, now, Mr. Apgar?" shouted the irate skipper.

"Hi'm savin' yer time, sir," responded Apgar cheerfully. "Hi found Hi could get the wrinkle o' these oil engines wot propel 'er on the surface, so Hi thought we might as well move along at normal speed, instead o' loafin' the w'y we been doin'."

McConaughy's expression changed.

"That's good worrk, Evan," he approved. "What can ye get out o' them?"

"Three times wot yer can out o' that old tub," retorted the Chief Engineer, with callous disrespect for the engines he had adopted for his own—engineers are fickle souls, always willing to fall in love with any new fabric, whose mysteries and capacities excel what they have known. "But for comfort's syke an' to avoid haccident, we'd better myke it a uniform speed o' six knots—an' we'll keep the length o' the tow-rope be'ind."

For the rest of the afternoon they made good speed, and the pace did not decrease after dark. McConaughy used the trick the destroyer had taught him the night before, and swung a single lamp over his stern taffrail, otherwise steaming with all lights doused and an extra lookout posted to guard against collision. The night passed without incident. The wind still continued moderate, with very little sea, and nothing happened to interrupt the progress of the *Emmaline* and her tow.

BY MORNING, however, they were in the main traffic lane close to the northern entrance to the Irish Sea, and it was not long before a heavy bank of smoke on the horizon developed into a lean black hull that raced up like a grayhound unleashed, a destroyer on patrol. As she ranged alongside the *Emmaline*, her crew lining the rail in open-mouthed astonishment, McConaughy noted with

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a chuckle that the officer on the bridge was the same confident person who had ordered him to follow into Portrush.

"What ship is that?" hailed the officer.

"*Emmaline Pankhurst*—Belfast for Archangel—in ballast," returned McConaughy in the same laconic words he had used before.

"The—" A stream of profanity echoed across the water. "Are you the sow-bellied, rust-eaten, vermin-crusted tub that gave us the slip in the dark, night before last?"

McConaughy leaned from his bridge and his eyes flashed fire.

"Keep a civil tongue in yer head, laddie," he roared. "I was a grown man before ye knew the kiss o' saltwater. An' remember this—I can look after maself better than you or any other fool in King George's navy. We've got the devil-fish that had ye scared, towin' harrmlessly asterrn there—an' it cost not a life to take her."

"I see you're towing a submarine," retorted the officer. "And I've got a torpedo trained on her and one on you, too, in case you're up to some Prussian trick, so look sharp, my man. Heave to, now, or I'll fire into you."

"Fire, an' be damned to ye!" shouted McConaughy, shaking his fist. "D'ye see that flag up there?" He pointed to his masthead. "That's the flag o' the British Empire—not the English Navy. Fire on it, if ye dare."

The destroyer's commander was plainly nonplussed. He tried a new tack.

"I don't want to make trouble for you," he said. "But I have my duty to do, and this is a most unusual situation. I must ask you to let me come aboard."

McConaughy rang the engine-room telegraph to slow down.

"If ye'd asked decently, like a man, in the firrst place, I'd have stopped for ye before. Come aboard, if ye want to."

The destroyer sidled closer to the *Emmaline*, and the officer, an agile young fellow, reached out and caught the rope-ladder that was flung down. A minute later, monkey-fashion, he scrambled over the rail.

"Sorry for our misunderstandin', captain——"

"McConaughy is ma name, Miles McConaughy."

The navy man did not try to conceal his surprise.

"McConaughy!" he repeated. "Are you —I say, I heard a story not long ago about you. Are you the fellow who sunk the *Unser Fritz?*"

McConaughy assented.

"And Hardress of the *Elk* took the credit! The story's just gettin' into the ward-rooms. I say, I was a snotty once—a midy, you know—under Hardress. I— By jove, old chap, I know how you feel. Will you shake hands?"

Rather reluctantly, McConaughy offered his hand.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Chivers - Grahame — Commander Chivers-Grahame, destroyer *Eremite.*"

"Ah," said McConaughy, "that explains it. Ye're not English."

"Not more'n half, anyhow. Why?"

"I knew ye couldn't be. Ye currsed too well, in the firrst place, an' after that, I took ye for a man—not an Englishman."

"Humph," grunted the *Eremite's* commander. "You do not seem to think much of the English."

"I do not," responded McConaughy concisely. "Now, what can I do for ye?"

He broke off suddenly to jump on the rail.

"Below there!" he bellowed to the destroyer's deck. "What are ye up to? Lay off from that submarine, or by the powers, I'll have her torpedo ye!"

Chivers-Grahame ran over beside him.

"What's biting you, now?" he demanded. "We're only sending a boat's-crew to take over the prize. Don't worry about your reward; I'll promise you my assistance. And I give you my word of honor, I'm generally considered an honest man."

"Did I say anything about a reward?" snapped McConaughy. "The plain fact o' the matter is, I took that submarine, an' I'm goin' to bring her into Belfast—or sink her. I was sent to get her—an' I'll bring her in."

"You were sent to get her?" The navy man collapsed feebly against the rail. "Look here, by any chance, are you an Admiralty secret agent?"

"No," snorted McConaughy in bitter contempt. "I'm in the employ o' the Red Funnel Line, which fitted me out to rid the Channel o' that hell-hound. An' the Red Funnel Line an' ma crew will get the credit for it, an' we'll tow her into Belfast for an object-lesson o' what can be done to submarines."

Chivers - Grahame collected himself together, with a weak grin.

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"You're an uncommon determined sort of nut," he commented. "However——"

He shouted down to his men to swing in the small-boat they were lowering.

"Have your own way," he went on, turning to McConaughy. "I'm —— if I'll quarrel with your kind. You're too unusual. But you can't get rid of me, you know. The Navy's been hopin' to get a chance to look at the vitals of one of these new U-boats for months, an' I wouldn't run the risk of your losing her. I'll have to keep you company the rest of your voyage."

"Do what ye please, so long as ye do not molest me," answered McConaughy indifferently. "I pretend to no control over others."

"All right. No hard feelin's, eh?"

Chivers-Grahame swung one leg over the rail to descend to the destroyer, thumping against the buffers between herself and the *Emmaline's* steel side. But suddenly his eye caught the medley of color that trailed from the submarine's jack-staff.

"What flag have you got there?" he asked with interest.

"Our own flag," said McConaughy.

"I beg your pardon." The officer was plainly puzzled. Just then a puff of wind snatched at the folds and blew them out. "I say, what are you? A bloody hand! Do you esteem yourself some kind of a modern buccaneer?"

"An' if I did, what then?" retorted McConaughy. "But no, sir. That's the flag o' Ulster, the Banner o' the Covenant."

Chivers-Grahame cast a long, lingering look over the skipper of the *Emmaline Pankhurst*, then swiftly ducked beneath the railing, his face convulsed with mirth.

"Oh, my sainted cat!" he apostrophized the unhearing hull of the *Emmaline*. "The Red Hand of Ulster—at sea! An Ulster buccaneer—in the Irish Channel. Ye gods and little fishes!"

He tumbled onto his own deck, weak from laughter, and confided the tale in choice instalments to his amazed juniors. Then, under reduced power, he steamed slowly along within sight of the two strange vessels that owned the rule of Miles McConaughy and the Red Hand of Ulster.

LATE that afternoon, the *Emmaline Pankhurst*, her prize and the attendant destroyer *Eremite*, were piloted through the mine-fields, duly escorted into the guarded waters of Belfast Lough and brought to rest under the admiring eyes of the city. Word of their coming preceded them up the estuary.

The unusual sight of a merchantman towing one of the dreaded U-boats was enough to excite the most ardent attention. The news reached the office of the Red Funnel Line before the Managing Director had closed her desk for the day; and accompanied by Captain Craven, she lost no time in setting out for the docks.

"Keep off," hailed a seaman at the *Emmaline's* gangway, as their tug tried to run alongside in the gloom. "Nobody allowed on board until morning."

"But this is Miss McNish," returned the Managing Director with a palpitating heart.

"Who? Miss McNish?" McConaughy's bull-voice boomed through the air. "Come aboarrd, ma'am. We have grand news for ye."

As she stumbled up the accommodation-ladder hastily lowered for her, McConaughy reached down and gave her a helping hand. She could not see very well in the failing light, and she brought her eyes close to his face as she asked breathlessly—

"Are your men—all safe?"

"Every one, ma'am," he answered cheerfully. "Not a scratch—an' the old *Emmaline's* just as good, too."

"How—how did you do it?"

He escorted her into the officers' mess, summoned Jock Grant and Evan Apgar, who had now been allowed to leave his cramped quarters, the boatswain's presence being deemed sufficient to protect the prize against any perfidious attempt by the navy to seize her out of hand. And between them they told her the story.

Long before it was finished, Miss McNish gave ample proof that she was a true woman, for all her Managing Directorship. She laughed when McConaughy recounted how they had given the destroyer the slip, and she cried when she heard of the fate of some of the submarine's men, and she laughed again at the recital of Jock Grant's fears of the U-boat's cramped quarters and how they refused to surrender their quarry to the destroyer on the *Eremite's* second appearance.

"It was splendid, Captain McConaughy —and you gentlemen," she exclaimed, with enthusiasm, her plain face lighted up, her

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eyes shining like stars. "I am proud to have you all with the Red Funnel Line. And you shall stay as long as you wish—forever, I hope. I have plenty of work for men like you, work you will love, I know."

"We'll be just glad to serrve ye, ma'am," returned McConaughy, with what was real humility for him.

"Ay," assented Jock Grant and Evan Apgar.

It was late when Miss McNish had been satisfied and consented to go aboard her tug again. As they emerged on deck, their ears were smitten by a weird sound that rose from the fo'c's'le.

"What's that?" she asked sharply.

McConaughy inclined his ear; then turned to his subordinates for advice.

" 'Hin 'Eaven's Lap We L'ys our 'Earts, an' They'll be W'ite Like Snow,' " said Apgar, after an instant's listening.

"Nay, nay," Jock Grant contradicted him. " 'Tis 'We Maun Reap, Brithers A', i' the Garrden o' the Laird.' "

"What do they mean?" Miss McNish besought of McConaughy in increased bewilderment.

"A bit prayer-meetin' like," he answered awkwardly. "We have been in the Valley o' the Shadow, as ye might say, an' the men are givin' their thanksgivin'—as is only proper. We have been bountifully protected out o' the grace o' Providence."

He bowed his head as he spoke, and Miss McNish noted, with a catch in her breath, that Apgar and Grant had done likewise. As she went over the side, they were still standing there, with their heads uncovered.

The Malemiut

BY JACK BURROUGHS

OH, THE malemiut is a crafty brute;
He'll lead you a merry dance.
He'll steal the grub from a sourdough dub
If he gets but half a chance.
He'd loot the sled of the sheeted dead
When the pale shade's back was turned;
Men brand him thief when he grabs the beef,
And the title is amply earned.

Oh, the malemiut is a vicious brute
And "fang for fang" is his law.
He'll snarl and scrap till his tendons snap
And the hide of his back is raw.
He'll nip the flank or rip the shank
Of the nearest dog in reach,
For his jaws are good, and his thirst for blood,
Is the thirst of a starving leach.

Oh, the malemiut is a faithful brute;
When you mush through the barren spaces,
He points his nose where the lead-dog goes
Till he drops in the blood-wet traces.
Oh, he may be a thief and he may be chief
Of the sinners you ever knew,
But he seems to say in his poor, dumb way—
"I'm yours, and I'd die for you!"

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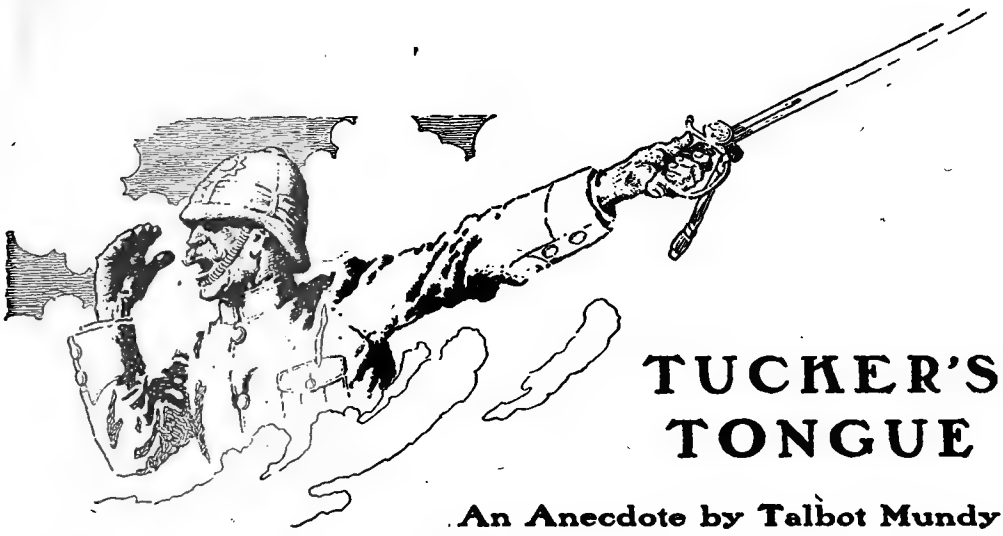

TUCKER'S TONGUE

An Anecdote by Talbot Mundy

IN THE British army at the time of the South African War there were two generals by the name of Tucker; in order to distinguish them they were known among the rank and file as Just Tucker and Bloody Tucker. Bloody Tucker was considered the most good-natured as well as one of the most efficient generals in the field; it was his command of language that had gained him his sobriquet, and not his sanguinary proclivities.

On one occasion he was commanding a column that had to cross the Vaal River at almost its broadest point. General Tucker sent his tent and personal baggage across first, and then went over himself in advance of the column to write up his reports, after delegating the supervision of the crossing to a subordinate officer by the name of Fisher.

Now this Captain Fisher was a very cautious man, who never left anything to chance; he took six men and rode into the river himself first, and by taking careful soundings he discovered that not only was the ford far from being straight, but that it was too narrow for more than one wagon or one gun to use it at a time. So he marked the ford out with stakes, and gave orders that the column was to advance across it in single file so far as the guns and wagons were concerned. Then he rode to the rear to get the column straightened out, and to send the different divisions down to the ford in their proper order.

As soon as General Tucker had finished writing his reports he walked down to the ford on the far side to see how matters were progressing; it took him about ten seconds to realize that they were progressing very slowly, and about ten minutes to finish swearing. After that he sent a galloper across with orders that the guns and wagons were to come over two abreast.

The galloper forded the river, conveyed his orders to the first person in authority he could find, and returned to General Tucker. In came the wagons and guns, two at a time, and in less than five minutes there was a struggling, drowning mess of men and horses in the middle of the river — wheels locked, guns overturned, and forage and ammunition spoiling in the water. Up rode Fisher.

"Whose orders are these?" he demanded.

"Some one on the far bank," they told him.

He looked across the river and saw a stout man in a khaki overcoat gesticulating and shouting orders from the opposite bank, and it occurred to him on the instant that the sooner he put a stop to this interference the better; there was nothing to be done until the other man left off shouting.

"What in —— d'you mean, sir?" he roared through his megaphone. "Who are you to give orders and tangle up the column?"

"Who in —— are you, sir, to question my orders?" demanded the stout man.

"I'll teach you who I am when I come over!" answered Fisher in a rage; "I'll have you broke for this, whoever you are!"

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The next ten minutes was taken up by a megaphonic battle of vituperation, and the sulfurous language that winged its way from bank to bank made even Tommy Atkins wonder. Then the column slowly disentangled itself again, and once more the guns and wagons resumed the crossing in single file.

It took the whole of the day to cross, and the last man over was Captain Fisher. Waiting for him on the far side was a bosom friend of his.

"Old man, I'm afraid you're in for it!" said the friend.

"Why? What have I done?"

"D'you mean to say that you don't know who that was that you were swearing at this morning?"

"No. I'm going to find out, though, and get him broke, the —— impudent ——!"

"That was General Tucker."

"Wha-a-a-a-at?"

"General Tucker."

"Tell me—what can I do about it?"

"Nothing, so far as I can see, except apologize. I'm afraid, though, you'll be broke. Still, there's just the one chance, if you apologize, that he might only send you back to the base; you never know your luck, and old Tucker's not a bad sort."

"I'll go now," said Fisher, "and get it over."

So Fisher rode up to General Tucker's tent, dismounted and saluted. General Tucker was sitting at a table outside his tent, surrounded by a crowd of aides; he looked up sharply.

"Who are you?" he demanded, after a moment's scrutiny.

"I'm the man who was swearing at you across the river this morning, sir; I've come to offer an unconditional apology. I hope you believe me when I say that I had not the very least idea that it was you whom I was swearing at."

"So-ho!" said Tucker. "You're the —— man are you? You've been stealing my thunder! I thought I was the only man in the army who knew those words you used! Sit down and have a drink! What'll you have? Say when?"

(Note. This is history. I know Fisher personally. He told me the story at Cape Town when we were both in the military hospital.—T. M.)

THE CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE FOR READERS, WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS

HERE is a bit out of a letter I received some time ago from Tom L. Mills, editor of the *Star* of Fielding, New Zealand, an enthusiastic member of the Camp-Fire with whom I have been in correspondence for some time:

My son had a fortnight of that fighting [at the Dardanelles] and passed through the three days' landing—continuous fighting—unscathed. Then he shipped down to Helles, where they landed safely amid fire again. Then he came to Krithia, and while leading a platoon in a charge up a hill he was shot clean through both buttocks, but no bone touched. He lay on the hillside, "bleeding like a stuck pig," from noon till dark, unattended, with a dead comrade lying at his right hand and a comrade shot in the stomach on his left. When help came his assistants were shocked at his pants full of blood. Two shells fell within two yards of him on different occasions—and didn't explode; and three rifles were shot out of his hands. So that luck was with him all the way. He was taken to Malta, where he is in the convalescent camp (and eager to get to the firing-line) at the time of writing. He tells me his bullet was a clean one, but in a Turkish trench he picked up a clip of cartridges in which the bullets had been reversed—blunt end out. Corporal Billy says the Australians must now be rated as the best fighters in the world. He had the pleasure of fighting all of one day with them with shot and bayonet. Fraternally, *Kia Ora*, TOM L. MILLS.

WORD comes of the death in England of Richard Marsh, author of "A Man with Nine Lives," the two-part story which appeared in *Adventure* about a year ago, and of many other stories in other magazines on both sides of the water.

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THERE are several writers who this month have their first story in *Adventure*, and so, in accordance with Camp-Fire custom, rise and introduce themselves to the rest of us. One of them is Wilbur Hall, writing from San Gabriel, California:

I wish that I might rightfully claim a place among the adventurers and argonauts who find their way into your Camp-Fire, but I can not. I am one of those intrepid seekers of "a place in the sun" who sit cozily by the fire and do their searching vicariously. Others go out and see and hear and fight and venture and win and lose, and come home to tell me about it—and thus only do I "fare about, tweaking Fortune's nose and laughing in the face of Fate."

WHAT I would like to do is to tell you something of the men who foregather here from all parts of the world and spin yarns and mention almost legendary corners of the earth by their first names! Allen Kelly, Mobley Meadows (dead now, but all his life a peace officer in the Southwest), Wyatt Earp, of the famous family, Cecil Haig, an engineer who, at thirty and odd, has done more constructive work than the average citizen does until he renders the world a real service by dying!—and a score of others. They are the adventurers—I am only a dull, writing person.

WAS raised in Los Angeles and have been in or near that city ever since. Went to Goldfield and Rhyolite in 1905 and saw part of that boom. Became more or less intimately acquainted with reclamation, especially in the Imperial Valley, as a newspaper writer. "Did police" four years, "City Hall" three, "politics" and "civic development" for a time—finding out a lot of little things—then took the future by the nape of the neck and began writing short stories. The only really adventurous deed I can claim is riding as mechanician in a pilot car sent to Phoenix from Los Angeles ahead of the 1914 road race, where I gathered a lot of "material" and "atmosphere" and nearly lost the only possession I have which I would find insurmountable difficulty in replacing—my life.

Oh, yes—I've stopped two runaways.

The bubble is burst. I am in *Adventure* under false pretenses. I am a dilettante hero—a Henry M. Stanley by proxy!

FOR the *Billy June* stories, with the first of which I make my bow to readers of *Adventure*, I am indebted to Mr. Cecil Haig, the young engineer of whom I wrote above, who knows his Mexico and his South America as well as any American of my acquaintance—as well, I believe, as any man anywhere, and who has supplied the local color and the characters, and most of the stories themselves. There is my frank confession—I am still only a reporter.

IN THE November issue we published a letter from one of our number who spoke of passing the "magnificent coaling station and naval base the Japanese are building at Turtle Bay;" of Jap destroyers preventing any one from going near the place, etc. Here is a letter written from his Majesty's Canadian ship ———, which hoots at the idea of a Jap base on the Pacific Coast to the south of us.

How about it, wanderers? Is there, or isn't there?

I am writing to you in reference to a letter that was published in *Adventure* of November issue regarding Japs' so-called base at Turtle Bay. Now, I think that your correspondent must be suffering from Japanitis or else he has had bad dreams. I have been in and out of Turtle Bay on an average once every two months for the past eighteen months and the most ships that have been in there have numbered six, viz.: Jap battleship *Asama* on the rocks, a repair ship salving her; a Jap cruiser used for relaying wireless to various points; two colliers and ourselves, and we stayed no longer than was necessary for coaling and then went to sea with colliers following.

NOW, you know, I dare say, that the United States Government gave the Japs permission to stay there till their ship was salved and then to move. Well, at present the bay is absolutely empty, save two huts containing Jap fishermen, who catch fish and peddle it along the coast. I don't think your correspondent can be American or else he would have known that the place was absolutely useless for a base. Firstly, there is absolutely no water there and it is of volcanic origin—in fact, a God-forsaken hole. He must evidently put the Government down as foolish not to know what is doing on their coast.

I don't hold any brief for the Japs and I have read several items in various papers about the same subject, still, I am surprised that a magazine of *Adventure's* circulation should publish such a letter, especially as it is liable to cause so much more ill-feeling between the races. God knows there is enough now without inquiring into the facts of the case. You might as well say that the little uninhabited islands of the Pacific are all bases because a collier stops there for a few hours and coals a ship in preference to coaling her at sea. Sometimes there has been no ship in there at all but ourselves. As for making it a base for offensive action, it is rot. You can publish this if you like, withholding ship's name and my own, as the authorities might be offended at my saying so much.

HERE, from back in the north woods, is C. L. Gilman, whose "Last Papers" is in this issue and who follows our custom and introduces himself along with his first story in *Adventure*. He writes from Tower, Minnesota, where, "after a final twenty-mile spurt by canoe to reach the settlements for a day," he found my forwarded letter telling him of the acceptance of his story and asking him to tell the Camp-Fire about himself.

It may interest you to know that the hunch for "Last Papers" hit me while I was rustling firewood on the hill back of my shack about a year

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ago. I looked up and, like *Arvit Honkala*, saw a file of men, red-capped and with their rifles at the shoulder, making their way across my hay-meadow. For a minute I caught the soldier illusion in full and was debating ways and means of making connections with my rifle. Then I realized that they were only a parcel of Finns from the settlement north of me heading for the ford by which the Elbow River can be crossed, the same being in my front yard.

At first I was inclined to picture the invasion of Canada as a dead earnest proposition, but it struck me as too wild a dream—and somewhat un-neutral. Last Winter, while in St. Paul, I was mighty interested to learn that a young German living there had had a mighty unhappy half hour in the office of the U. S. district attorney for using the mails to agitate a similar scheme. His plan was to collect a lot of pro-Germans in North Dakota, close to the border, under the pretext of hunting prairie-chicken, and strike across there.

BARRING the night when Mrs. Gilman and I blame near rammed a moose while fanning the canoe up the Elbow River in the dark, I don't recall anything in my recent history which strikes me as a regular, sure enough adventure. Of course there are the usual hazards of forest living. Day before yesterday I fell under the canoe on a rocky portage. If I had busted something it would have been decidedly unpleasant. We were about thirty or forty miles from anywhere, with two or three portages, one a man-killer about a mile and a half long, beginning and ending in a swamp, to negotiate.

BUT I suppose it's all in the point of view. Probably my present occupation would class up pretty well as adventurous to the innocent bystander. To me, however, it is simply the most pleasant way in the world of making a living and part of the game is to reduce chance to a cinch. When Old Man Adventure plants his moccasins on my trail, Scout—the same being the best dog in the world—sort of smells him and instead of his getting the drop, he most generally hears an invitation to "put 'em up," and sees the front elevation of a howitzer protruding from the bushes at the side of the trail where our hoof-marks indicate that we're somewhere ahead.

Being of the third generation of Gilmans to infest this northern Minnesota country, the game strikes me as mostly all in the day's work. I was raised in a small to medium town down State, enjoying all the advantages of being a sickly, under-weight, near-sighted runt. Went through the University of Minnesota, taking the law course by request and college newspaper work and politics by preference. Graduated into a Minneapolis newspaper shop and ran the whole course from cub reporter to city editor with a few side steps into theatrical press work.

MARRIED a girl who was game to take a chance. Stood city life while I could, but the woods kept calling for me. We finally made the break in the Spring of 1912 and filed on a homestead about thirty miles south of Canada and eight miles from a post-office. The day when a man could make a living hunting and trapping is over; the land, mineral and timber resources of this country have passed into the hands of the folks who wanted them the worst. I couldn't farm my land if I wanted to, and I wouldn't if I could. And anyhow, if I did, I'd have to packsack my produce to market.

So I naturally followed my old trade and began looting the woods with a typewriter and camera—sportsmen's magazines and newspaper syndicates. Am even supposed to be an "authority" on some phases of woods-living and gun-craft. Will write verse about the wilderness, when properly provoked.

JUST at present I'm "cruising" for pictures and data for the outing folder of the railroad whose stationery I'm using. Last week, with a hired man to help paddle and portage, and Scout for company and a bed-warmer, made a pilgrimage through an obscure bit of wilderness where we traveled six days without meeting any one. It is too late in the season for pleasure cruising. We encountered some snow and ice and were wind-bound two days. At that we crossed considerable water where the little sixteen-footer took a good deal over the gunwale. Week before we went up the North Kawishiwi and came down the South, discovering a few portages not on the map and seeing plenty indications of beaver, deer and moose. In the Summer this should be great country to photograph the two last named. They spend most of their time in the water then. Tonight I'll head out for Hunter's Island, up on the Canadian side of the border.

THIS is still a wilderness country, though the big iron mines and the sawmills have established first-class little cities right in the heart of it. You launch your canoe at a live little town and paddle around a bend in the river or a point in the lake and find yourself in the primeval woods. I suspect that the *Snow Burner* may have pulled some of his stuff hereabouts.

Rough, hard, lonesome and dangerous—in a quiet, commonplace sort of a way. No ravenous beasts or really bad bad men, but just the eternal pressure of the wilderness—an air-hole masked by fresh snow and a forty-below wind to finish its work when you crawl out, a snowshoe stubbed under a bit of brush; an extra six inches on the crest of wave when you're fighting all the sea your canoe will stand; a rolling stone on a side-hill portage with a nice, hard river-bed twenty feet below.

And the most beautiful country in the world. "Those who drink from the Rainy always come back." You can't quit it—and you don't want to quit it. It's big enough to think in. Hills that are mountains, muskegs which seem endless, timber which stands in the loam of centuries and through it all a perfect network of lakes and rivers which make a road for your canoe in Summer and your snowshoes and toboggan in Winter to every place you want to go.

BUT this isn't exactly adventure. Come to think of it, probably the biggest stunt we've pulled was to fetch our daughter up here when she was eight weeks old. City friends and relatives harshly accused us of murderous designs and seemed almost disappointed when we fetched her out at Christmas-time as healthy as a cub bear and about four months ahead of her age in physique. I guess she's probably one of a mighty few modern white children who have been raised in a *dickanagen*, the Indian back-board cradle. Not just put in to see how she'll look, but actually packed around the

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country in one and regularly put to sleep in it. Hunted partridge and rabbit with her on my back last Fall.

I'm afraid this is pretty tame stuff. And pretty lamely written. As a matter of fact I'm so pack and paddle sore that it hurts my shoulders to hit this machine and my fingers are mostly blisters from cooking over too big fires we had to kindle to keep warm nights and thaw out in the morning. Consequently I'm going back after some more of it.

NOW for the final statistics. American from 'way back. Age 33, height 5-8, weight 175. Full beard and amber glasses. Packing capacity about 120 pounds. Disposition timid and peaceable. Good camp cook. Can take a canoe anywhere there is eight inches or more of water within a couple of miles. Qualified marksman with rifle under N. R. A. rules. Shoot a pistol with either hand and am the worst hunter in the world. Never quarrel with my compass and can travel by a map even after discovering glaring errors in it. Despise a shotgun and all gasoline-propelled conveyances. Firm advocate of peace. Believe owning a gun and knowing how to use it the best way for a man—or a nation—to secure the careful consideration of his—or its—neighbors. Fond of children and dogs and enjoy wearing a dress suit next to sporting a mackinaw overshirt, stagged pants and an automat.

AS YOU already know, this office can no longer supply back issues of *Adventure* back of 1914, and even 1914 is exhausted except for a few stray copies. For the benefit of those who wish to complete their files of the magazine, we publish, free, notices from those of you who for one reason or another have back issues they are willing to sell. Of course we assume no responsibility in these matters, do not in any way act as agent, and publish such notices only when we happen to have space. Here are the offers for the past month:

1911 (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12); 1912 (6, 7); 1913 (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12); 15c each. Carriage extra.—IDA M. KEYS BEEBE, 2305 First St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

All issues from Nov., 1910, to Oct., 1915, inclusive. 15c each; must be taken by one person.—FRANK L. HARRIS, 33 Mountain St., Camden, Me.

All issues to date *except* 1910 (12); 1911 (7); 1914 (6, 7).—LOUIS C. MULLIKIN, 167 Hillside Ave., Newark, N. J.

1910 (11, 12); 1911 and 1913 complete, 15c each or $1.50 per doz.; 1912 complete *except* (10, 11), 15c each or $1.00; 1914 (1, 2, 3, 4), 15c each or 50c. Carriage extra.—DR. CARL E. MCCOMBS, 296 Madison St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

SINCE last Camp-Fire I have heard from our friends Major Foran and W. Townend. The latter has been made a lance corporal; the former is home in England recovering from a wound received in France (not at the Dardanelles as I had thought). From Harold S. Lovett, our American friend serving in the marines of H. M. S. *Agamemnon* at the Dardanelles, the last word is the following letter dated August 26th. I've been compelled to hold it some time before I could find space for it:

Guess I'd better let you know I ain't dead yet. Have just got over a taste of dysentery. We are doing nothing in the fighting line. Ain't had a rub for some time, but we are doing our best for those who are, in other directions. All the same, I kind of feel I'd sooner be at it. There sure ain't any fun in working if you know there's some fighting and such fun hiking around.

The Kaiser's guys are sure getting on to Russia's tail, but they'll get a bellyful of Russia presently, and then God help them. I've no news, but I'm still as confident as ever about the whole outfit anyway.

Just heard that my brother has stopped a German bullet. He came over in the "Canucks."

Best wishes and luck, HAROLD S. LOVETT.

AFTER being two months on the way, there came to me a letter written on board the SS. *St. Antoine* bound from Sydney, Australia, to New Caledonia. It was from Captain E. F. Allen of the Ellece Islands and gives some interesting facts concerning our old friend Bully Hayes, who in his time was famous—or notorious—throughout the South Seas. Also it corroborates in all essential details the story of the death of Hayes as worked out by us of the Camp-Fire when we were running down that mystery of the Pacific:

During August last year, while traveling on the American steamer *Venturer* from Pago-Pago to Sydney, I saw a copy of your magazine in which appeared an article relating to Captain Hayes' death. I have been in the Pacific since February, 1882, and have met members of Captain Hayes' family. On my first trip I was shipmate with a man who had sailed with Hayes shortly before his death, and at various times have come across many others who have either sailed, traded with, and been taken down by Hayes or they took him down. On a recent visit to the Gilbert Islands, I met two old traders who were at Jaluit in the Marshall Islands when Hayes was killed, and from notes kept by them I glean the following, which bears out the tale I heard from my shipmates in 1882:

HAYES was at Jaluit in the schooner yacht *Lotus* in March, 1877. A man known as Dutch Peter, who shipped at Samoa as cook and deck-hand, ran away and went among the natives. Hayes paid Kabua, the chief of Jaluit, a box of tobacco to capture Peter and return him to the ship. Kabua handed Peter over to Hayes in front of Capelle's store. Peter said to Hayes: "Captain, I can not get on with you. You had better let me go. If you take me to sea and continue to abuse me, I will do you some injury." Hayes replied that he would and could look after himself and, despite the protest of several bystanders, Peter was taken forcibly on board.

The *Lotus* sailed on March sixth for Ponope and returned to Jaluit on March fifteenth in charge of the

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mate. An inquiry was held at Jaluit by Captains Henry and Oliver, American citizens, one of whom was master of the schooner *Maggie Johnston*, which arrived at Jaluit at the end of March, at which the following facts were elicited:

PETER, the cook, was at the tiller. Hayes was lying in his bunk with a tell-tale compass overhead. Noticing that the vessel was steering wildly, he put his head up through the companion-way and remonstrated with Peter, who replied that he was not a sailor and if Hayes could do better himself he had better come and do so. Hayes said something about shooting and turned round to go down the stairs again, evidently with the intention of getting a gun. Peter drew the iron crutch, used for supporting the main boom, across the deck with his foot and, seizing it, struck Hayes on the back of the head with it, causing instant death.

The care of the schooner was handed over to Messrs. Capelle and Co., pending advice from interested parties in San Francisco. The *Maggie Johnston* sailed for San Francisco on May 15, 1877.

From an old file of the Samoa *Times* I learn that Hayes left Samoa in the *Lotus* on October 9, 1876. That was his last visit to Samoa. Both of my informants are perfectly clear about the above and most of it is taken from a diary. So I do not think there is the slightest doubt about the dates, etc., being correct.

ONE tale of Hayes that I never saw in print was told me many years ago by an old trader in Fiji known as Harry the Jew.

In the 70's Hayes bought Harry's cocoanut-oil and paid him, as was the custom, partly in goods and the balance in Chile dollars. While the goods were being packed up, Harry put his bag of dollars on the table and with Hayes and others drank a considerable quantity of gin. When he went to count the dollars next day, he found they had been replaced by iron washers.

On Harry's next visit he was smiling as usual and was very sorry that some one on the ship had done such a dirty trick, but, of course, it was not his fault. Harry, who had a much larger quantity of oil than usual, again sold it to Hayes, but took care to avoid the gin and got his dollars and trade safely on shore. The traders were all coopers and made their own casks, and on this occasion Harry had fitted a large bamboo from the back of the cask to bung-hole. The bamboo was filled with oil and the balance of the cask with salt water, so he got more than his own back. When Hayes next returned, he was just as happy as ever, and admitted changing the dollars, also made Harry a present of a watch which the old chap (seventy when I saw him) was very proud of showing. There are many other old Island tales that I have heard, or experiences gone through, that I may send you if they are of any interest.

DANIEL L. HANSON'S story in this issue is, as you will see from the following, pretty well based on facts. Some of the proper names, of course, have been changed and there are other minor alterations, but the main point of the tale was an actual happening.

1910 was a rest year with me, and I spent it in Mexico till the revolution got too warm—and the balance, some ten months, I was in Europe—especially in my old home, Norway. While killing time one day in the Grand Café, I was told about the attempt made by Russia some years ago—to cross the narrow "neck" of Norway and reach open sea. As I wanted to see that part of the country I started northward, and put in four weeks in the region that the Czar had looked upon as his own. I traversed the district on foot—vast forests and dreary moorland, clear to the Russian frontier—and beyond till I was stopped and had a deuce of a time getting straightened out. Part of the rails were still there and, of course, many indications of where grading had been done—and this on Norwegian territory.

Back in Christiania, I learned how Norway, through its States Minister of that period, had circumvented Russia, with the aid of England. Björnson, whom I knew—now dead—did much, and Mikelsen more. Out of this grew the story which I enclose—fiction in its details—but based on the attempt, which if successful would have changed the history of the world.

FROM Portland, Oregon, comes a letter about our "Letter Friends" department and the kind of work it does. It's worth reading. The more you think about that little department, the greater possibilities for good and happiness you see in it. It was started, you remember, at the suggestion of George H. Hicks of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, a man whose active and adventurous life ended at home on a sick-bed. A letter from his family told us he had gained great comfort from the letters his suggestion brought him through *Adventure*.

WHEN I opened the department in the magazine I had in mind chiefly those who had wandered free-footed on adventurous businesses into the earth's far places but who had at last become chained to one spot by illness or by business or family claims. Surely they would be wanting word now and then from those still wandering where they had wandered.

I had in mind also, however, the wanderers still on their adventures. I knew that most of them come upon lonely times once in a while and that some of these have drifted out of touch with friends and kin and would welcome a "letter friend" of fixed abode at home. The little plan was meant to give service both ways, going and coming.

But it will be of service in still other ways. It is its human quality that is its chief value and that makes it so various in its possibilities.

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It may be of interest to you to know of the result of my name being in Letter Friends column. I have had 224 replies to date.

From my experience with the Letter Friends column, it is going to be one of the really big things in the magazine. There are many of us fellows who call wherever we hang our hats, home, and a few friends back in God's country to write to make us feel a little more like "decent" people. Long may the column last, say I.—JACK FITZWALLACE.

Of the 224 replies 8 were from old friends who had either lost Mr. Fitzwallace's address or never had it; 33 were "from fellows worth while and with whom I am at present corresponding." That is a pretty big return—8 old friends and 33 new ones!

LETTER FRIENDS

NOTE—This is a service for those of our readers who want some one to write to. For adventurers afield who want a stay-at-home "letter bunkie," and for stay-at-homes, whether ex-adventurers or not, who wish to get into friendly touch with some one who is out "doing things." We publish names and addresses—the rest is up to you, and of course we assume no responsibility of any kind. Women not admitted.

(18) Frank Caldwell, 108 E. 12th St., Austin, Texas.
(19) Henry Lautenschlager, 721 James St., N. S., Pittsburgh, Pa.

FOR more than half a year I've held, for lack of space, the letter from W. Townend, of which the following is a part. It tells of the splendid death of his own brother at Neuve Chapelle. I think you will agree that "he was a man."

I have taken full advantage of the permission he gives to pass his letter on to you of the Camp-Fire. I do not think he meant that I should pass on his own words as well, but I am doing so. They are very simple words and, somehow, I think they will make you like him better and value him the more, as I do, as a friend.

I AM sending you two cuttings from a paper which may or may not seem worth reading. I told you my brother had been killed, didn't I? His death was, I think, very fine, and we are all very proud of him. I myself can not imagine a more fitting end for any man. The driver of the ambulance wrote me a very nice letter a few days ago. He said that my brother knew that his legs were gone. "It was in fact his composure, in what seemed full knowledge of his loss, that so greatly impressed all who saw him."

AN OFFICER'S HEROISM

A motor-ambulance driver at the front sends his mother a thrilling account of the fortitude and cheerfulness of an officer under the most distressing conditions. The writer says:

"AFTER dinner I commenced a letter, but was interrupted by a shell bursting somewhere in the vicinity and a man yelling for bandages. Of course I rushed to see if I could be of any use, and found that the shell had burst at the side of the road about forty yards away, right in the midst of a party of Indian engineers who were inspecting the telegraph wires. T——— and I grabbed stretchers from our car, and with some others rushed for the Indians. I was late in starting, owing to my litter, and all the Indians were being attended to when I arrived on the scene.

"HOWEVER, I saw some one in the shell-hole, which was on the side of the road opposite from where the men had been hit, and so had escaped notice. In it was a man, the white officer of the Indians, who appeared to have his legs half buried in the débris of the hole. He told us to attend to the others first; he was all right. And then, as we moved him, we saw that he was standing on the stumps of his legs! Both had been shot off at the knee. (I'm telling you this story, horrible as it is, because of the extraordinary courage the man showed—such courage as I've never seen before, and hardly imagined. It's worth while bearing the horror of it to realize that we are officered by such men.)

"He was perfectly conscious and calm, and spoke as though he were a medical officer and some one else the victim. He looked at his legs as we moved him on to the stretcher and asked me quietly (he was not in the least excited, and his handsome face showed no pain) to tie something tight round both thighs to stop the bleeding. I did what I could with my handkerchief and another I requisitioned, and we took him to our billet. We had to move hurriedly, of course, as a second shell had followed, and we wanted cover in case any more arrived.

"THERE were two R. A. M. C. men with us, and they attended to the subsequent first-aid. They discovered another horrible wound in his arm, and while they were dressing it he told them he thought he would give up football next year! We then took him to the nearest hospital; he was still conscious and perfectly collected, and laughed quietly and talked, apologized for the trouble he was causing, while on his way to the hospital. And I came back thinking of that tag in some book or other—'I have seen a man.' The poor fellow died in hospital."

AN OFFICER'S HEROISM

Under this heading a letter from the front published in Monday's *Morning Post* described the death of an officer who, we learn, was Capt. Francis Whitchurch Townend, R. E. A short biographical notice appeared in our columns on April 3rd. He was attached to the Meerut Signal Company, and commanded the Dehra Dun Brigade Signal Section. He had been relieved by a junior officer, but begged to be allowed to remain in the trenches till the fighting was over. At the battle of Neuve Chapelle he was engaged in laying cables after the Indian Brigade had taken the enemy's trenches, and was killed while picking up cables.

IN THE regimental orders his commanding officer said of Capt. Townend: "His sterling qualities, kindness of heart, and devotion to duty endeared him to all ranks, and by his death the company and the Signal Service have lost a brave officer and gallant comrade." The officers of the Meerut Signal Company have asked the family to be allowed to erect a monument over his grave in Bethune Cemetery. Capt. Townend, an old Dulwich boy, was an all-'round athlete. He played Rugby for the Royal Engineers at Chatham and for the Bombay Presidency in India, as well as cricket for the Royal Engineers against the Artillery at Lord's.

"Great as your loss has been," so the letter goes on, "you would have been very proud could you have heard the almost tearful words of some of the old soldiers who were present. 'He's a man' may not be such great praise; but something big is needed to earn it from men who see death and risk it every day, as some of those who were with us do. I heard men say 'Well, I wouldn't mind getting it, if I knew I could take it like that.' We were only a small party at Suicide's Walk that afternoon, but there are many hundreds of men who heard of how Captain Townend died."

RATHER a nice letter to get, wasn't it? If, by the way, there is anything you would like to quote from this little account from the front, go ahead. I don't suppose that you would want to, nor that it would be interesting to the average reader, but all the same it was a great end, wasn't it?

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OUR identification cards remain free to any reader. The two names and addresses and a stamped envelope bring you one.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of ADVENTURE, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

ANOTHER of our new writers this issue who introduces himself to us according to our Camp-Fire custom is William Dudley Pelley, now of Vermont:

The author of "Scruples" is taken by the neighbors for somewhere between thirty and thirty-five years, born in Lynn, Massachusetts, and keeping it quiet; made to quit school at fifteen to swell the family exchequer, and shouting his head off over it. His chief adventure in life was owning a fat share of a dividend-declaring corporation which he had an immodest share in building before he was thirty, and rooting in out-of-the-way corners of the United States, Newfoundland, and Labrador with overwork as an excuse, and, a competitor contriving to get control of the stock, lighting with cold, hard bump on the asphalt without—this last "without" meaning the price in his trousers of a bean sandwich.

IF YOU will refer to a map of northern Canada and Alaska you will note a profusion of Pelly lakes, mountains and rivers in that section, the same being honored by my grandfather's uncle, who was an explorer for the Crown who drew a salary and got away with it. My people on my father's side were seamen and whalers, so it is not unusual that, freed from the care of a manufacturing business and given the grand bounce simultaneously by a rag, a bone and a hank of hair, who couldn't see any class to love in a cottage, I became a "whaler" also, and whaled round the North American continent considerable. My mother says I have lived more stories than Ananias ever told, but I am imbued with an excessive consignment of newspaper modesty and am willing to let the details come out later on—on the principle that fiction is stranger than truth.

I KNOW a little something about the Labrador ice, the wilds of Newfoundland and the forest primeval of Acadia. I have tramped across Canada and managed to cover, off and on, pretty much of that triangle between Halifax, the Wasatches of Utah and the droning forenoons of Ole Virginie. Once I went pretty far south, but they lynched a colored person quite near my hotel window, and as I had had experience as a newspaper editor I decided I better take flight.

In the days before the factory, where my father put me in charge of the help and whaled haitch out of me if I didn't get along with them and get the work out of them to boot, I had worked in a printing office, where I learned to tamper with the English language. When I finally landed on a berth as editorial writer and "phunny man" on a Springfield, Mass., newspaper, I began to have designs on the magazines and for four years, despite good berths on newspapers in all connections, I have sweat blood to make good on magazine work and put the stuff over.

DURING the past four years I have owned two newspapers of my own and am now city man with ex-Governor Frank E. Howe of Bennington on the *Evening Banner*. I acted the base ingrate with my first Springfield editor by setting up housekeeping with his proofreader, who can do anything from making over a last Winter's hat to sticking on a half-broke cayuse with long stirrups. She is some girl and my worst and best critic. When I produce anything which makes her laugh or read to the end without comment, I immediately sit down and figure out how I shall spend the check—in safety.

Politically I'm a Protestant Scotch-Irish Yankee—if you can figure out that combination, and my ambition is to pack the two-year-old baby girl, the typewriter and the wife aboard a tin lizzie and spend the next three years pulling up the West to look at its roots, incidentally looking up the Pater, who is cashier of a lumber camp in a wild section of the Wasatch Mountains. Whether I do, depends on whether I can put over the stuff to float me.

BUT with what mellowing experience I have had already—from being lost on a broken-down steamer at sea on a November night, to taking the lady away from a three-foot white casket—combined with what I shall dig up if the price of gasoline doesn't get too prohibitive, I'll warrant eventually I will send you some stuff that's fit to publish. I will certainly have a fit if I don't. When I get through with *Hooty*, the Montana cowman, who represents the Montana of today—not of 20 years ago—I'm going to give Norman Duncan a run for his money on that eastern-ice snow-stuff. My grandfather and his brothers spent most of their lives there and combined with what I've seen of the country personally, I'll give you some yarns that ought to finance that exploring expedition on the good ship Ford.

THE RED-HEADED REGIMENT

IT IS a disadvantage common to all monthly magazines that they must be made up a considerable time in advance of their appearance on the news-stands. So it happens that while our Red-Headed Regiment was first proposed some time ago, the issue containing that suggestion has, at this writing, been on the stands only a few days

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and replies have just begun to come in.

All those so far have been A1 in quality and strong in enthusiasm. How many there will be eventually and how long it will take for the returns to come in, it is now, of course, impossible to predict. A thing like that can not be put through in a jiffy. It took the American Legion, also started by us of the Camp-Fire, half a year to get firmly on its feet, though it was doing good work in far less time than that. But the main point is that organizing such a regiment is very well worth doing.

THERE is, of course, a smile connected with the idea, but don't make the mistake of smiling without stopping to think. There is plenty to think about—enough to carry you as far as considering changes in the United States Army, enough to pretty well stir up most things in this world if you were to apply the philosophy involved. Smile at the idea of a Red-Headed Regiment if you want to, but don't forget to use your brains a minute afterward.

There are several points to consider carefully:

1. Any step toward adding to our national defense deserves support.

2. Redheads are known the world over as fighters. None better.

3. Organizing a Red-Headed Regiment would do something to the country *psychologically* that would tremendously help the cause of national defense. And by means of the very things that cause that smile. People don't dislike redheads, but have a peculiar liking for them and a wholesome respect for them, particularly as fighters. With those hints, figure out for yourself the psychological service I have in mind.

4. Added to its material and its psychological aid to national defense is a third service to that cause—its unquestioned publicity value.

5. The fifth point is big enough to fill a book. I can only sketch it here. This country could raise no other regiment that could equal the Red-Headed Regiment in one thing whose value can not be overestimated—esprit de corps, the verve, unity, devotion, the all-conquering spirit that, since the beginning of history, has won battles where mere courage, discipline, strength and efficiency of equipment have failed.

AND this fifth point opens the way to the philosophizing I spoke of. There are no fools so fat-headed, blind and utterly stupid as the fools who fail to recognize the psychological, the spiritual, the sentimental, as a *practical* factor in all the affairs of men—the biggest factor of all. Ask any soldier whose brain isn't mere beef whether it increases the *practical efficiency* of a regiment to give it that unseen, intangible, spiritual thing we call esprit de corps. And the more he knows about soldiering in the big sense, the louder he'll say yes!

Perhaps some day the United States Government will get sense enough to see the *practical* value of psychology and sentiment, and—among other things—give the regiments of our Army distinctive and appealing names of their own instead of stupidly cataloging them off with a lot of dry numbers. A costless way of increasing the Army's efficiency that is too simple to be deemed important by the very, very wise men who control our affairs. Yes, think as well as smile when the Red-Headed Regiment is mentioned.

MEANWHILE its actual organization is up to those of you who can boast red hair. This magazine will act as a rallying-point and headquarters until enough of you have joined together to complete your own organization. I'll keep the roster of names here. Later, application blanks similar to those of the American Legion can be filled out. A board of regular Army officers can pass on the actual qualifications of the members and select the regiment's officers accordingly. To attempt choice of officers in any other way would be more than foolish; many are the organizations that have gone to pieces on that rock.

As previously explained, actual military training is not necessary to join, for there will be a needed second battalion to go into training the moment the first battalion goes to the front.

GO TO it, redheads. It's up to you. Through all the length and breadth of the land there would be no more famous regiment, in war or in peace, than the Red-Headed Regiment, no other whose fortunes would be so followed by the people, and no other that should give a better account of itself or more deserve its fame when it came to the battle test.

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HERE are two letters bearing on the mystery of General Sir Hector Macdonald, one from Toronto, the other from W. Townend, who, as you know, has since left England with the hospital corps for the firing-line in France.

Re inquiry concerning Maj.-Gen. Sir Hector Macdonald: I have read the correspondence published in your columns with considerable interest. Some time during 1906, or thereabouts, there was a story published in either the Natal *Mercury* or Natal *Advertiser*, both Durban papers, to the effect that a Durban merchant, who had known Macdonald intimately, had just returned and had informed the paper that, during a business trip up a certain river in China, he had seen a European officer drilling some native troops. On approaching them the merchant was surprised to find that the European was none other than his old acquaintance, Maj.-Gen. Sir Hector Macdonald. He advanced to the general and addressed him, whereupon the latter turned his back without a word and walked away. The local authorities immediately afterwards forced the merchant to return at once to the coast.

The above is, I believe, the origin of all the stories concerning Macdonald being alive in China.

SOME months after the above-mentioned item was published, I came across a report of a Court of Inquiry held in Ceylon, concerning the charges that had been made against Macdonald. The report stated that the Court had made complete investigations and found that the accusations were unfounded and had been made by malicious and jealous persons. The report exonerated Macdonald completely.

The report of the Court of Inquiry was published in one of the above-mentioned newspapers, or perhaps in the Melbourne *Argus*. I was always sorry afterward that I did not clip the item, as I never saw it referred to again, nor have I ever met any one who was aware of such a Court of Inquiry ever being held. I can only conclude that some error must have been made on the part of the newspaper that published the information or that Macdonald's enemies were numerous and powerful enough to be able to keep the finding of the Court so quiet.—CAPTAIN J. F. WANDLESS, Toronto, Canada.

MY LATEST news as regards the Hector Macdonald mystery is this: One of our sergeants is Scotch, and he comes from very near Dingwall, where Hector Macdonald was born. He says that in Dingwall they swear that he is still alive. Very few people believe that he is dead. He is supposed to be buried in St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, and there one may see his name and rank, etc., on the gravestone, or a brass memorial plate—I don't know which. But is he himself in the coffin? Some say that it is filled with lead or stones, and not a corpse.

And now comes the curious part. The sergeant told me that less than a week ago he was coming up from Brighton by train with two petty officers of the navy, two men from the *Birmingham*, the small cruiser that is supposed to have fought the big German *Von der Tann* which disappeared: this, by the way, is one of the mysteries of the war. At any rate, in the course of conversation one of these sailors swore that he himself shook hands with Hector Macdonald in Hongkong two years ago. He was absolutely sincere in what he said. Both the sergeant and one of our corporals gave me his conversation verbatim, or as near so as possible. He said there was no mistaking him.

SO THERE you are. What does it mean? And it is common gossip out on the China coast that Hector Macdonald is still alive. Have you no correspondent in Hongkong who will give you further particulars?—W. TOWNEND.

INFORMATION DIRECTORY

IMPORTANT: Only items like those below can be printed—standing sources of information. No room on this page to ask or answer specific questions. Recommend no source of information you are not *sure* of. False information may cause serious loss, even loss of life. *Adventure* does its best to make this directory reliable, but assumes no responsibility therefor.

For data on the Amazon country write Algot Lange, care U. S. Consul, Para, Brazil. Replies only if stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed and only at Mr. Lange's discretion, this service being purely voluntary. (Five cents postage in this case.)

For the Banks fisheries, Frederick William Wallace, editor *Canadian Fisherman*, 35 St. Alexander St., Montreal. Same conditions as above.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii and Alaska, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

For Adventurers' Club, get data from this magazine.

For The American Legion, The Secretary, The American Legion, 10 Bridge St., New York.

Mail Address and Forwarding.—This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

For cabin-boat and small boat travel on the Mississippi and its tributaries, "The Cabin-Boat Primer," by Raymond S. Spears; A. R. Harding, Publisher, Columbus, O., $1.00.

National School Camp Ass'n; address its Sec'y, 1 Broadway, New York.

Red-Headed Regiment, address this magazine.

SOME of you still confuse the Adventurer's Club with our Camp-Fire. Our Camp-Fire is a purely informal affair, with no red tape, no officers, no by-laws, no dues, no restrictions as to membership. If you want to belong to it, all you have to do is to sit in.

The Adventurer's Club is an entirely different matter. It is a separate organization with constitution and by-laws, officers and definite requirements as to membership. The Camp-Fire and *Adventure* have no connection with it whatever. To join, you must qualify as a real adventurer, make written application and be voted on.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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WANTED —MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or parts of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. **N.B.—Items asking for money rather than men will not be published.**

SIX or seven reliable men willing to go into Mexico, possibly South America, on prospecting trip. Expenses paid by members of club. Profits, if any, shared alike by all. Must be honest and well qualified. Affairs in Mexico will probably be more favorable by time we are ready to start.—Address P., care The *Statesman*, Ardmore, Okla.

Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.

ONE or two fellows of good habits, 18 or 19 yrs., to take a canoe trip down the Mississippi, in the Spring, to New Orleans, then strike out for Mexico or Central America.—Address HARRY MCBRIDE, care Mispah Hotel, Syracuse, N. Y.

TWO partners on trip to the interior of Labrador Peninsula, Canada. Intend to start April 1st and be gone all Summer. Men of good character and each man to pay his personal expense and share of outfit. Fine chance for taking photos and gathering specimens, etc.—Address RUDOLPH LEE, 2602 Riverside Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

PARTNER to go into British Columbia in the Spring. To camp in the Summer and hunt and trap the following Winter. Must be of good character and willing to share expenses.—Address W, 306.

PARTNER to work way to South America. Must be congenial, of good character and a gentleman.—Address HENRY ROMBERG, care P. Y. Slatten Star Ranch, Hotchkiss, Colo.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE.—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

MASON, JOSEPH ERNEST (Guiseppe Ernesto Mason). Interpreter for the Red Cross Mission to Armenia, 1889. Served in the Boer War with the B. S. A. P. Organization, returning to the States at its close. Went West to St. Louis. Last heard of from San Francisco. Well educated. Age 42. Blonde, blue eyes. Good horseman and rifle shot.—Address L. T. 303.

THOMPSON, JIM F. ("Cyclone 'Beachnut Jimmy'"). Please write your old pal of New Mexico days. Remember the last night in ——, B. E. Africa when the Remington pulled us through? Saw Capt. Billy, T. S. Parrott in 'Frisco, '14. "Toledo Red" never came back. Last heard of you in Michigan headed West.—Address "SULLY" 9811, Cd., O. Care *Adventure.*

GARDNER, FRANK, formerly member A Troop of the gallant 8th Cav., Fort Meade, S. D. At one time on U. S. S. *Marion* at Callas. Later, interpreter at Naval Hospital, Cavite, P. I. Last heard of as cowpuncher for "C. Y." outfit in Wyoming.—Address DR. D. P. MCCORD, Golden West Hotel, San Francisco, Cal.

SETON, CAPT. ROBERT ARTHUR, with Castro in Venezuela 1899. Uribe-Uribe, Colombia, 1900. Mexico before revolution of Madero in Culiacan, Topolobampo, Sinaloa. Expert machine-gun and long-distance rifle instructor. Englishman, age 40.—Address GEORGE BRACE, care British Consul, New York City.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WHEELER, JOSEPH HARRY, last heard of Milwaukee, 1886. Home in Cincinnati. Machinist. Worked for Allis-Chalmers Co., Milwaukee. Good news. Please write.—Address EDWARD (TEDDY) MURPHY, Gen. Del., Detroit, Mich.

H. NIELL (NIELSON). Native Son, late U. S. N. Likely in Australia or Canada.—Address his old shipmate, M. J. ("SCOTTY") LOGIE, C Co., 3d Battalion, Black Watch, Nigg Camp, Rosshire, Scotland.

ANY BOYS, Troop 9, 13th U. S. Cav., 1908-11, also those in the Parhm & Dean Lumber Camp, North Brownville, Me., Winter of 1913.—Address JOSEPH BAGGIOLINI, 5 Lynn St., Worcester, Mass.

DOWNER, VEARNE, brother. Last heard from 10 yrs. ago in Portland, Ore. Mother and sister grieve for you. Please write us.—Address MRS. CARRIE GILLEN, 668 Pearl St., Benton Harbor, Mich.

BLY, ROYAL R. (called Richard or Dick). Left Kendallville, Ind., 1884. Has two sons Donald and Harry. Was in restaurant business in Spokane, Wash., 1909. Has been reported in Winnipeg, Ottawa, and other Canadian cities.—Address G. D. MCLEOD, Netherland Hotel, Chicago, Ill.

MOORE, J. A. (Jack), last heard from Tremedoc, North Wales, England, breaking horses in British Army. Bronco twister, cow and harvest hand. 19 yrs., 5 ft. 8 in.; gray eyes. Father wants news.—Address ANDY COLEMAN, Verden, Okla.

GARNACHE, WILLIAM J. Served in U. S. Army. In Mexico during the Madero and Huerta régime. Made canoe trip from Pittsburg to New Orleans on Ohio and Mississippi. Last heard of Puerto, Mexico, 1913.—Address W. H. PRIFER, Jr., 24 S. Centre St., Pottsville, Pa.

ZAPPERT, WALTER, late of Fire Brigade, Alexandria, Egypt. 1907 in London Fire Brigade, Cannon St., London, E. C. Believed to be in trenches of Allies.—Address LOUIS ZAPPERT, care The Men's Hotel, Buffalo, N. Y.

TIPPIT, W. A. (Arthur). Once Baptist minister in Galloway, Tenn. Formerly from Texas. Believed to be in the North. 46 yrs. Tall, slender; iron-gray hair. Reward for information concerning whereabouts.—Address PASCAL W. HARKER, 18 Heritage, Valparaiso, Ind.

SHEERN, THOMAS EUGENE, last heard of Shakespeare, New Mexico, 1888. Engineer. 62 yrs., blue eyes, dark hair, imperfect right thumb.—Address J. J. SHEERN, 821½ Grove St., Boise, Idaho.

FINLEY, SAM, last heard of Tonopah, Nev., 1909. Blacksmith and miner. 52 yrs.; 5 ft. 9 in.; 180 lbs.; sandy complexion.—Address G. C. DAGGETT, 1000 S. Jennings, Ft. Worth, Texas.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In the January and July issues all unfound back names will be printed again.

FALLETT, BOB, cousin. Last heard of 1876. Came to America 1875 from England with William Fallett. Supposedly gone to cousin's on a ranch.—Address MRS. L. JACKSON, Morrisburg, Ont., Canada.

DOWNER, SIMON (Tom), in Lincoln, Nebr., 1909-10. Write to your pals.—Address L. K. LOCKHART, Box 179, Sioux City, Iowa, and JOE M. SCHULER, Gen. Del., Houston, Texas.

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FRAIN, RODERICK, last heard of Cripple Creek, Colo. Age 61. Brother inquires, care GORDON & GOTCH, 33 W. 42nd St., New York City.

SWARM, E. A., last heard from Chicago about 20 yrs. ago. To your advantage to write your brother Charles in Baltimore, or F. J. SWARM, 910 Stewart St., Seattle, Wash.

ASHENFELTER, LOYDE. Discharged from C. A. C. at San Francisco, July, 1914. Last heard of then.—Address B. O. CLAUSEN, 333 St. Paul St., Baltimore, Md.

ROGERS, GEORGE JOHN, formerly railroad man on New York Central. 27 yrs.; dark-brown eyes; brown hair; 5 ft. 7 in. Write mother, 7 Garden St., Auburn, N. Y.

FREEMAN, AL, last seen in Chapman, Kansas, 1898. Known in Junction City, Kansas. Any word held strictly confidential.—Address L. T. 305.

ANIBA OR KENNEDY, ALFRED, cousin, last heard of central Pennsylvania. Write to 1316 Mt. Vernon St., Philadelphia, Pa.

ANDERSON, JOE, former bunkie. Discharged from U. S. Army Hospital Corps, Manila, P. I., 1901. Age 38.—Address O. E. MCKEEHAN, Malabang, Mindanao, P. I.

BASYE, THOMAS T., with some cow or sheep outfit in Montana. Tom Holloway has money for you.—Address E. T. BASYE, 1523 Broadway, Seattle, Wash.

BURNETT, ALICE, cousin. Worked at one time in Warner Brothers' corset factory, Bridgeport, Conn. Last heard of Corry, Pa.—Address JOHN L. HAYWARD, Co. H, 1st Inf., Honolulu, H. I.

DYER, MICHAEL, left Colfax, Cal., 19 yrs. ago. Went to Canada and then Australia. Last heard of in Sydney.—Address MARTIN DYER, 818½ Florida St., San Francisco, Cal.

SPARHAWK, HARVEY and EMMA. Lived in Talmadge, Ohio about 1878. Anxious to know if they are still alive.—Address THEODORE STEPHENS, Co. D, National Military Home, Kansas.

KNIGHT, JOE (Cop). At one time Sheriff of Berrien Co., Ga. Last heard of in Texas or the West.—Address FRED R. BROWN, Sycamore, Ga.

THOMAS, WILLIS I., uncle, last heard from in Los Angeles 1913 or '14. About 49 yrs. old.—Address MISS B. G. THOMAS, 10 Warren Ave., Malden, Mass.

DENSON, JOHN, Hozen, Ark. Mother wants to know whereabouts. Have good news.—Address JOE DENSON Hozen, Ark.

COURISH, ANDREW, Dona Ana, N. M., 1898. Also Mike Grace, somewhere in Rocky Mts., 1900, and Frank Whelan, California, 1913.—Address JACK H. CARROLL, Lenyburg, La.

FRAIN, JAMES, deaf mute, age 65. Last heard of St. Louis, 1875. Brother inquires, care GORDON & GOTCH, 33 West 42nd St., New York City.

CUFF, MART, with me in Panama, 1912 and '13.—Address JAMES F. O'BRIEN, 575 East Main St., Bridgeport, Conn.

BENSON, GEORGE D., last heard of serving in Philippines, 1899. Fort Adams, '98 with 2nd U. S. Artillery Band.—Address L. T. 304.

RANDALL, W. S., former partner. I wish very much to get in touch with you. Important.—Address L. T. 302.

RANDOLPH H. ATKIN, Lawrence Stewart, S. N. Morgan, Percy A. McCord, Christian A. Damm, please send us your present addresses. Mail sent to you at addresses given us doesn't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

NUMBERS 56, 68, 73, 76, W 93, W 167, W 140, W 150, W 153, W 183, W 184, W 189, W 195, W 203, W 211, W 212, W 215, W 231, W 250, C 189, C 205, L. T. 207, L. T. 284, C 293. Please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care *Adventure*.

THE following were inquired for in full in the January issue of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine.

ASH, CAPT. GEORGE, Missoula, Mont.; Anderson, William or "Bill," Ft. Wayne, Ind.; Butts, or Olstrom; Godfrey; Bishop, Angus (Jack); Bishop, Charles; Costelloe, Jack, Australian, hiked with Ed. Bushby; Fisher, Joseph, Great Falls, Mont.; J. P. C.; King, Frank M., Paris, Tex., Sept. 7th; Lambert, H. L.; McKeever, John A.; Marlock, Dan (Shorty); Pearson, Walter; Ryan, William, Australian, hiked with Ed. Bushby; Standbaugh, Lester; Semple, James T.; Stephens, Will, Ottawa, Ont., Can.; Stevens, Claude (Tex.), Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; Watson, Louis, Black Mt., N. C.; Walton, Jack, Jacksonville, Fla.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

The following stories are at present booked for the March issue of *Adventure*, out February 3rd.

THE SECRET OF *CAPRICE* ***Henry M. Neely***

A complete book-length novel, full of tense, dramatic situations, dealing with a mystery yacht on our Atlantic Coast. The girl in the case is a winner. She's the sort that can soar thousands of feet above earth in an aeroplane, or handle a horse like a man.

PARADISE BEND ***William Patterson White***

This story of the rolling, unfenced West carries the force and the swing of the big outdoors, with surprises that crack like the lash of a lariat. There's plenty of fun, too, in that rough, frontier town, Paradise Bend.

THE STORY OF WILLIAM HYDE ***Patrick and Terence Casey***

You get the finish of this amazing tale of Central Borneo. All the fire of that ancient race of Tartars living there, blazes through these closing pages. And William Hyde "comes out" of the Jallan Batoe.

TOO MUCH BUSINESS ***Thomas Addison***

The writer is becoming famous for his clever salesmen-stories of the road. He has seldom given you a more ingenious plot or more likeable characters.

A MAN AND HIS DEEDS ***Donald Francis McGrew***

She turned him down cold, and he thought her the "only girl." But out in the Philippines this young American soldier "bucks up" and tries to prove himself a man.

THE PILLAR OF FLAME ***Edward S. Pilsworth***

Every hour thousands of dollars were being lost in an oil-well fire. The well might be saved at the risk of a man's life. You'll want to know the man who volunteered.

LI'L SON-OF-A-GUN ***J. Allan Dunn***

Sandy Bourke rides straight into the face of death to save him—the li'l son-of-a-gun.

BUFFALO TENS ***Stephen Allen Reynolds***

The U. S. Secret Service runs head-first into a tangled problem as hard to straighten as a snarled fish-line.

WILD BILL IN DEADWOOD GULCH ***Robert V. Carr***

A graphic description of one of the West's most touching dramas, and the finish of "Wild Bill," once famous from the Dakotas to the Coast.

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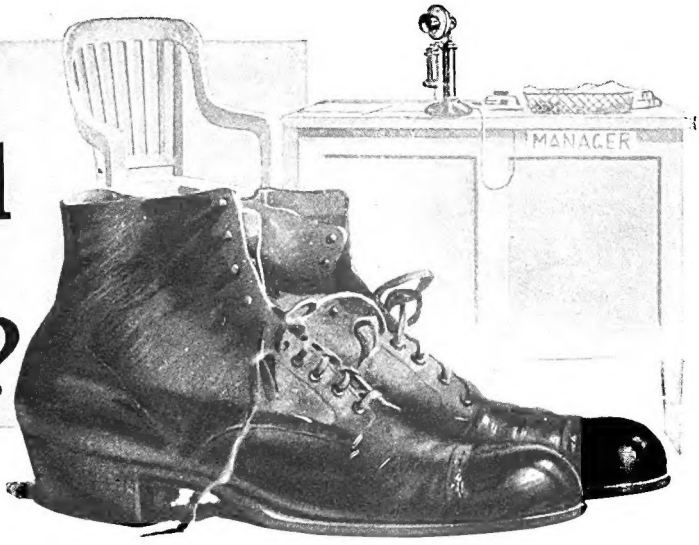
Could you fill his shoes?



SUPPOSE a good job were open where you work. Could *you* fill it? Could you jump right in and make good, or would the boss have to pass you up because you lacked *training?*

The man who is offered the big job is the man who has trained himself to hold it *before* it is offered to him.

Don't *take chances* on being promoted, don't *gamble* on making good when your opportunity comes. If you want a big job that carries responsibility and pays good money, *get ready for it.*

Pick out the job you want in the work you like best. Then start *right now* to get, through the International Correspondence Schools, the *training* that will prepare you to hold it.

Thousands of men have advanced through I. C. S. training to the very jobs they wanted most. What these men have done *you* can do. All the I. C. S. asks is the chance to help you—the same chance these men gave it. No matter where you live, the I. C. S. will come to you and train you in your spare time in your own home.

The job you want is within your reach. I. C. S. training will win it for you. The thing to do now is make your start. Mark the attached coupon and get it into the mail. Don't let a moment waste. Here's the coupon—mark and mail it now.

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Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X

☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING	☐ ADVERTISING
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Window Trimming
☐ Electric Railways	☐ Show Card Writing
☐ Electric Wiring	☐ Lettering and Sign Painting
☐ Telephone Expert	☐ ILLUSTRATING
☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEERING	☐ DESIGNING
☐ Mechanical Drafting	☐ BOOKKEEPING
☐ Shop Practice	☐ Stenography and Typewriting
☐ Gas Engines	☐ Higher Accounting
☐ CIVIL ENGINEERING	☐ Railway Accounting
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Commercial Law
☐ MINE FOREMAN AND SUPT.	☐ GOOD ENGLISH FOR EV'YONE
☐ Metal Mining	☐ Teachers Course
☐ STATIONARY ENGINEERING	☐ English Branches
☐ Marine Engineering	☐ CIVIL SERVICE
☐ ARCHITECTURE	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Building Contractor	☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ Architectural Drafting	☐ POULTRY
☐ Concrete Engineering	☐ Textile Manufacturing
☐ Structural Engineering	☐ Navigation ☐ Spanish
☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING	☐ Chemistry ☐ German
☐ Sheet Metal Worker	☐ AUTO RUNNING ☐ French
☐ SALESMANSHIP	☐ Motor Boat Running ☐ Italian

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Present Occupation_____

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WE ARE going to appoint a large number of subscription representatives—men—before February 1st to develop business on EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE.

In your locality an appointment will be made and carry with it a real opportunity. We wish a family man, now employed—possibly a bank clerk, a salesman, a factory superintendent, or a young professional man—who desires to supplement his present income by $10.00 or $15.00 a week. The person appointed should be well known and liked, and above all, genuinely earnest in his intentions. Many of our representatives now working under similar appointments earn over $15.00 a week extra, and do it easily.

The appointment is permanent, and we furnish everything. What we are essentially interested in now is locating the type of man who can measure up to our standards of purpose, integrity, and salesmanship. We have the opportunity.

If you feel that you are the man for your locality, return the coupon below to-day.

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Gentlemen—I would like to know more about this proposition. I can take the time, have the ability and acquaintance, and want the money. I enclose the names of two references.

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Street and No. .....

City ..... *State* .....

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